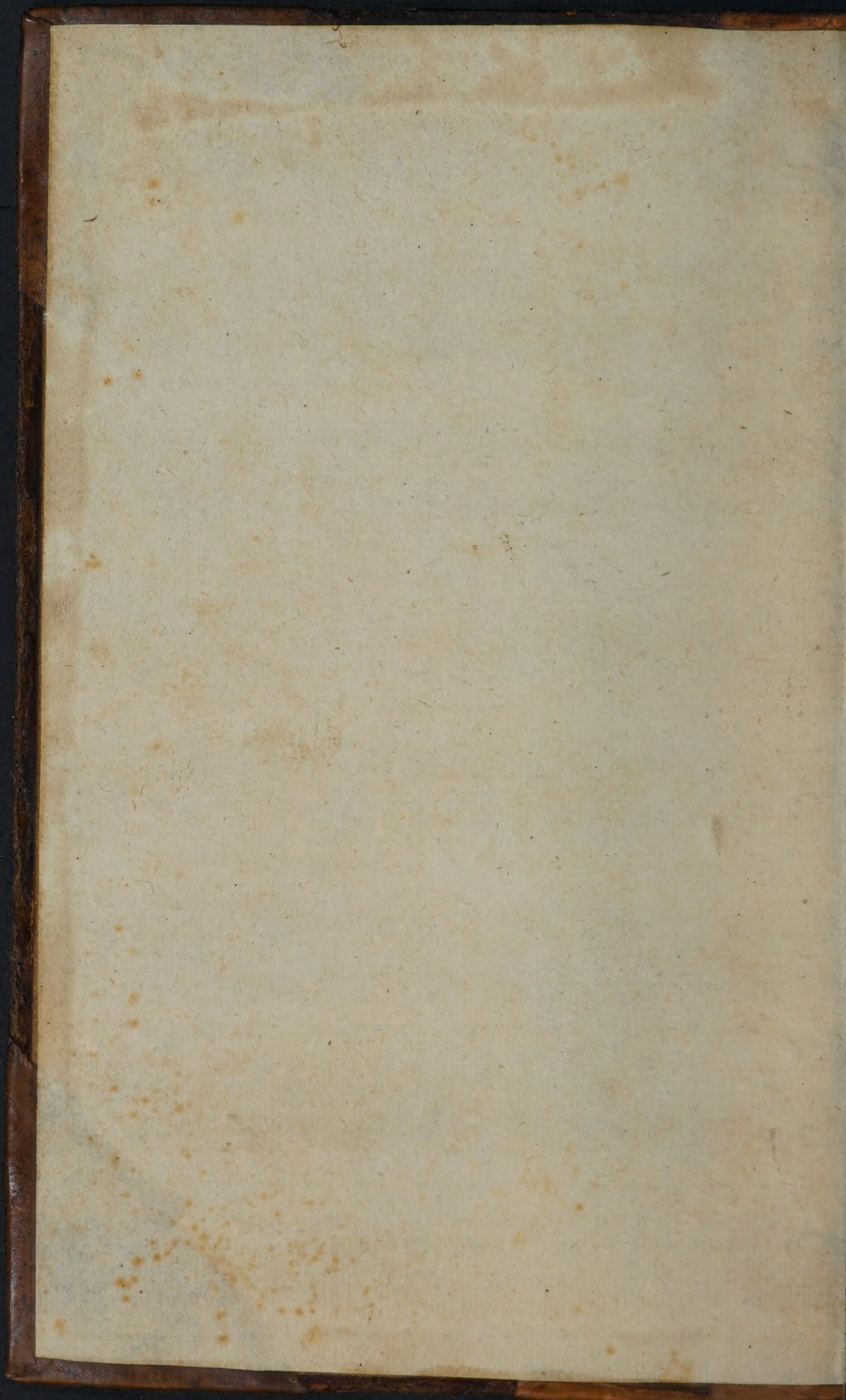


ALPHA-
BETIC
WRITING

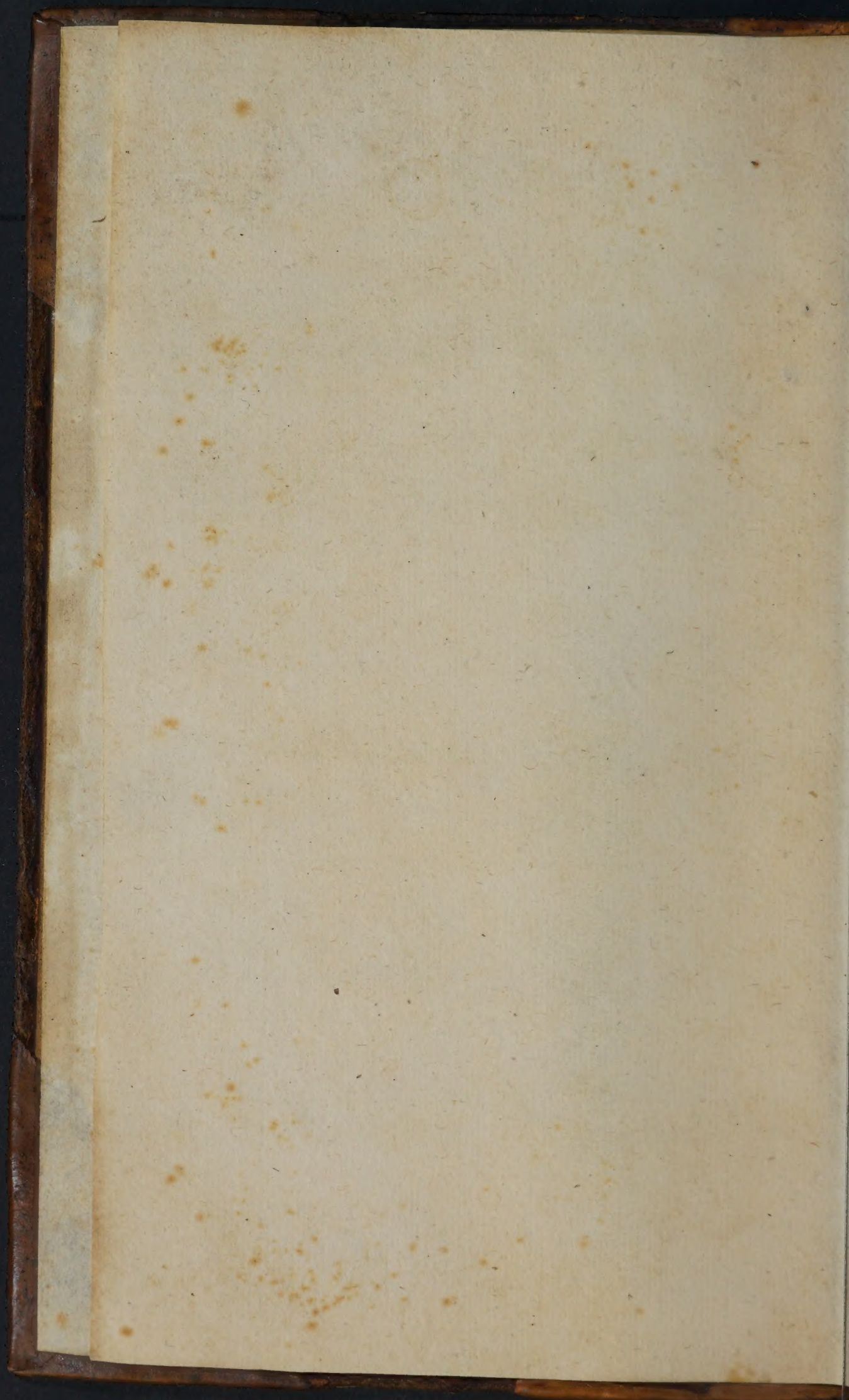








First edition
by Charles Davy



CONJECTURAL OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
O R I G I N
AND
P R O G R E S S
OF
ALPHABETIC WRITING.

CONJECTURAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

ORIGIN

AND

PROGRESS

OF

ALPHABETIC WRITING.

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Plate I.

Numeral Powers of the Greek Letters.	Names of the Greek Letters.	Order of the Greek Letters.	Order of the Hebrew and Syriac Letters.	Names of the Hebrew and Syriac Letters.	Order of the Samaritan Letters.	Order of the Syriac Letters.	Vocal and numerical powers of the Hebrew, Samaritan and Syriac Letters.	Organical distinction of the Letters.
1	α λ φ α	A. α	Σ	א ל פ א	Α. Ν. Α.	Ⲁ	A	1 vowel
2	β η τ α	B. β	Ⲃ	ב ה ת א	Β. Θ. Θ.	Ⲃ	B	2 labial
3	γ α μ μ α	Γ. γ	Ⲃ	ג α μ μ α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	G	3 palatine
4	δ ε λ τ α	Δ. δ	Ⲃ	ד ε λ τ α	Δ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	D	4 lingual
5	ε - ψ ι λ ο ν	E. ε	Ⲃ	ε - ψ ι λ ο ν	Ε. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	E	5 vowel
6	β α υ . . .	Ϝ. Ϝ	Ⲃ	β α υ . . .	Ϝ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	v. u. w	6 labial
7	δ ο η τ α	Z. ζ	Ⲃ	δ ο η τ α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	Ds	7 lingual
8	η τ α	H. η	Ⲃ	η τ α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	H	8 aspirate
9	θ η τ α	Θ. θ	Ⲃ	θ η τ α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	Th	9 lingual
10	ι ω τ α	I. ι	Ⲃ	ι ω τ α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	J & i	10 vowel
20	κ α π π α	K. κ	Ⲃ	κ α π π α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	K or Ch	20 palat.
30	λ α μ δ α	Λ. λ	Ⲃ	λ α μ δ α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	L	30 lingual
40	μ υ . . .	M. μ	Ⲃ	μ υ . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	M	40 labial
50	ν υ . . .	N. ν	Ⲃ	ν υ . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	N	50 lingual
60	ξ ι . . .	Ξ. ξ	Ⲃ	ξ ι . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	Ks or X	60 dental
70	ο - μικρον	O. ο	Ⲃ	ο - μικρον	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	O	70 vowel
80	π ι . . .	Π. π	Ⲃ	π ι . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	P	80 labial
900	ρ α ν π ι . . .	Ρ. ρ	Ⲃ	ρ α ν π ι . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	Ts	90 dental
90	κο π πα	Ϛ. Ϛ	Ⲃ	κο π πα	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	Qu	100 palat.
100	ρ ω . . .	P. ρ	Ⲃ	ρ ω . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	R	200 lingual
200	δι γ γ α	Σ. σ	Ⲃ	δι γ γ α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	S	300 dental
300	τ α υ . . .	T. τ	Ⲃ	τ α υ . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ	T	400 lingual
400	υ - ψ ι λ ο ν	Υ. υ	Ⲃ	υ - ψ ι λ ο ν	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ		
500	φ ι . . .	Φ. φ	Ⲃ	φ ι . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ		
600	χ ι . . .	Χ. χ	Ⲃ	χ ι . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ		
700	ψ ι . . .	Ψ. ψ	Ⲃ	ψ ι . . .	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ		
800	ο - μ ε γ α	Ω. ω	Ⲃ	ο - μ ε γ α	Ⲃ. Ⲃ. Ⲃ.	Ⲃ		

It is evident from inspection, that the omission of the two letters Tshade and Qup in the Greek Alphabet, occasioned the difference we observe in the numeral powers of the following Letters P Σ T. from the numeral powers of the corresponding Eastern Letters; and that sampi as the Greeks called the character Ϝ in all probability was not added to their numerals, till after the invention of the double o. or ο-μ ε γ α. notwithstanding which, as its form was borrowed from that of the Samaritan Tshade, it assumed its original place amongst the Letters, and preceded the numeral Ϝ ο π π α.

See Martini's Cudmus græco-phenix.

E. Mason
Bidderman
Hunt

CONJECTURAL OBSERVATIONS
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ORIGIN AND PROGRESS
OF
ALPHABETIC WRITING.

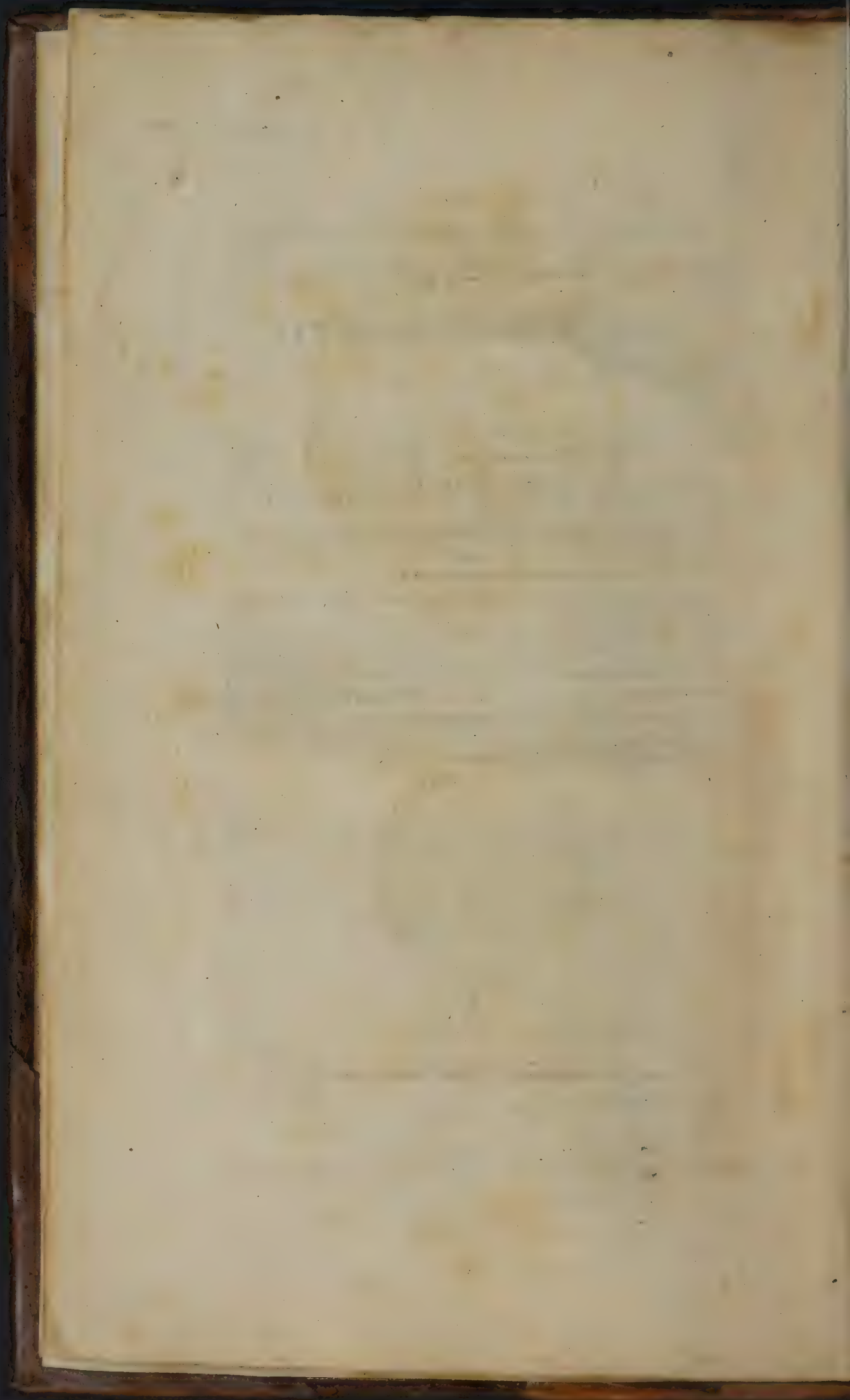
Quale per incertam Lunam, sub luce malignâ
Est iter in filvis, ubi cœlum condidit umbrâ
Jupiter, et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem. VIRG.

*Neque inter nos et eos qui se scire arbitrantur quicquam interest,
nisi quod illi non dubitant quin ea vera sint quæ defendunt,
Nos probabilia multa habemus, quæ sequi facile, affirmare
vix possumus.*

CICER. Acad. Lib. ii.



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TO
SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT, BART,
OF

DUNMOW, IN THE COUNTY OF ESSEX,

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E S S A Y

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH THE GREATEST RESPECT,

BY HIS MOST OBLIGED HUMBLE SERVANT,

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OTTAWA



P R E F A C E.

THE following Essay was begun and well nigh finished without any regular plan. An attempt to gain a just idea of the Grecian music, having led the Writer to compare the compass of the voice in *song*, with the compass of the voice in ordi-

A 3

nary

nary speaking ; This by accident occasioned an enquiry into the number of *elemental sounds* in language, upon which the construction of an Alphabet is founded ; and he was afterwards induced to connect his scattered remarks upon the discovery of Letters, which are here submitted to the Public. Should they carry the Reader into an entangled path, he is at liberty to retreat when he pleases ; and must blame himself, if he pursue it longer than may suit with his amusement. The knowledge we acquire by travelling up to the remotest ages, rarely answers its fatigues ; our journey for the
most

most part lies through barren deserts, or a deep enchanted wood ; where the traveller is ever liable to be seduced by false lights ; whilst the avenues to Truth are guarded by the phantoms of Mythology ; and, having reached, at length, the distant point, from whence he hoped to find the prospect clear before him, his farther progress is cut off by an unnavigable ocean, and all beyond it is obscurity.

With regard to the Principle upon which the *Grecian* Alphabet is here supposed to have been altered

tered from the *Hebrew* or *Samaritan*, however probable the Writer thinks it, he is far from presuming it will appear as probable to others. It might possibly have stood a fairer chance for an *allowance*, had a more exact delineation of what are conceived to have been the original forms of the Greek letters been given ; but a hint may be sufficient for those, whose judgement is of most importance in decisions of this kind, which require some little practical skill in drawing, or at least a habit of discerning what are the *principal* lines of any object upon which its character depends ;

P R E F A C E.

v

pend; and it is to be lamented, that these but seldom are accomplishments of the most profound scholars. This defect in our general method of Education hath been a source of error, in transcribing monuments of antient literature; nor is the evil confined only to inscriptions upon brass and marble.

Whether what hath been advanced in support of the Divine Inspiration of Alphabetic Writing, (which by some hath been *too* zealously asserted) shall be thought conclusive, is a matter likewise about which the Writer is not sollicitous,

solicitous, since there is undoubted room for a diversity of opinion. Should the more judicious favour his design, and not entirely disapprove the manner of its execution, the attempt will give him pleasure; but if otherwise, the Reader still may be indebted to his errors, and he trusts it to the censure of the Public; *neque vero errasse turpe est, est enim initium sapientiæ; si non ei ipsi qui fallitur, at aliis non fallendi* *; or, as one of our own countrymen, by whom the Church hath been unwittingly obliged, speaks

* Scal. de Caus. L. L.

speaks more fully ; *Even mistaken writers, by putting men upon enquiries may make them see farther than themselves ; and, by this means, both encrease the number of capable judges, and render some of the Learned better judges than they were before* †. To support known errors, hath either a degree of madness in it, or what is worse ; and a *rigid* stiffness in opinion, however it may be by *accident* consistent with a love of Truth, is always inconsistent with the method of acquiring it ; as, unhappily, we find it is too often
with

† Mr. Collins.

with that candour, which is due to those who differ from us.

If any other apology is wanting, it may be for seeming to affect a greater share of skill in oriental learning, than the writer *knows* himself entitled to; and digressing sometimes into observations, that are slightly, if at all connected with his *argument*.

Enough is said in this acknowledgement to obviate the *first* remark, with those whom he would wish to satisfy: for the *second*, if the observations of themselves be just, it matters little
upon


upon what occasions he hath introduced them, since though to many they are needless, yet others possibly may think them written to some purpose.



O B S E R -

E R R A T A.

- PAGE 28, line 3d, should not have begun a new paragraph.
Page 39, note, l. 2, for *Scei*, read *Skei*.
Page 57 and 59, note, for לראות, read לראות.
Page 69, l. 11, for *second and third pages*, read *fifth page*.
Page 71, second reference, for *page 2, 3, note*, read *page 5, note*.
Page 78, l. 1, for ה, read ה.
Page 92, l. 9, for ם, read ם.
Page 94, l. 2, for ם, read ם.
Page 95, reference at the bottom, for *p. 3*, read *p. 5*.
Page 109, l. 13, dele *which*.
Page 114, l. 2, for *Scriptures*, read *Scripture*.
Page 121, l. 2, for ממר, read מסר.

 The THREE PLATES are to be inserted between
Pages 110 and 111.



OBSERVATIONS
UPON
ALPHABETIC WRITING.

THAT Writing, in the earliest ages of the world, was a delineation of the outlines of those things men wanted to remember, rudely graven either upon shells or stones, or marked upon the leaves or bark of trees ; and that this *simple* representation of forms was next succeeded

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ceeded by *symbolic* figures, will generally be allowed : if afterwards we add to these such contracted representations of them as the characters of the *Chinese* are said to be, together with * *syllabical* marks which still continue with their neighbours of *Japan*, we possibly may comprehend the whole that human unassisted wisdom contributed towards the completion of the art. But to wave the determination of this at present ; if the knowledge of alphabetic writing was not originally communicated by *Moses* to the *Israelites* at the delivery of the law from Sinai, by whom it was imparted to the nations around them, such is the confusion of historic † evidence upon the subject,

* Dr. Kempfer's History of Japan, Vol. II.

† Literas semper arbitror Assyrias fuisse, saith Pliny, sed alii apud Ægyptios a *Mercurio* ut Gellius, alii apud *Syros* repertas volunt ; utique in Græciam intulisse e Phœnice *Cadmum* sedecim numero, quibus Trojano bello *Palamedem* adjecisse quatuor hac figurâ Θ, Ξ, Φ, Χ, totidem post eum *Simonidem* melicum Ζ, Η, Ψ, Ω, quantum omnium vis in nostris recognoscitur. Ari-

ject, that we are altogether at a loss to fix even the *date* of this astonishing, if not divine, discovery; a discovery which, after Providence thought proper to contract the term of human life within the narrow boundary of seventy years *, be-

B 2

came

stoteles decem & octo priscas fuisse A, B, Γ, Δ, E, Z, I, K, Λ, M, N, O, Π, P, Σ, T, Υ, Φ, et duas ab Epicharmo additas Θ, X, quam a Palamede mavult. Anticlides in Ægypto invenisse quendam nomine *Menona* tradit, XV annis ante *Phoroneum* antiquissimum Græciæ regem; idque monumentis adprobare conatur; c diverso *Epigenes* apud Babylonios DCCXX annorum observationes syderum, coctilibus laterculis inscriptas docet, gravis auctor imprimis; qui minimum *Berosus* & *Critodemus* CCCCLXXX annorum; ex quo apparet æternus literarum usus. *Nat. Hist.* l. vii. c. 56.

Berosus lived in the time of Alexander, and Epigenes in that of Augustus.

* It appears from the xth Psalm, (if this Psalm be ascribed to its proper author) that the general term of human life was reduced to seventy years before the death of Moses; though his own life, as well as that of Joshua, were lengthened out beyond it; for Moses lived to 120, and Joshua to 110 years: and it is submitted to the reader, whether the period
of

4 OBSERVATIONS UPON

came *necessary* to advance the progress of Science, as well to enlighten and prepare mens minds once more for the reception of revealed Truths, which had been so generally perverted, as in order to prevent such a perversion of them for the future. Upon a supposition that letters, properly so called, were not first taught by Moses, all that we are able to trace out from history concerning their invention, amounts to little more than some few plausible conjectures in what country they were earliest propagated, whilst the author of them is entirely unknown; and these *conjectures* are supported, rather upon our knowledge of what relative height the arts and sciences had attained in some nations above others, (as it is natural to suppose they

of this reduction may not probably be placed between the death of Joseph, and the departure of the Israelites from Ægypt. Jacob, when he first appeared before Pharaoh, speaks of the days of the years of his life as few, though he was then 130 years old, and Joseph lived to see Ephraim's children of the third generation.

they might have been advanced by the facility of conveying mens ideas in written language) than upon any credit that is due to the authority of the most antient writers in this particular; since whoever shall take the trouble of enquiring into their several pretensions, will find the accounts they have left us to be not only different from each other, but, for the most part, inconsistent in themselves.

The *Hebrew*, the *Samaritan*, the *Syriac*, and the *Greek* Alphabets, not to mention any other, seem to have had but one author, *forasmuch* as their respective letters follow each other in the same * order, having the

B 3 same

* It will very likely be objected that this is not really the case; that the letter Υ for instance, in the Greek alphabet, which ranks after T, the nineteenth letter, and hath the numeral power of 400, ought, according to the Hebrew order of succession, to have been the *sixth* letter, with the numeral power of 6 only; and that other letters of the Greek alphabet might be brought to oppose what is here laid down.

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same numeral as well as vocal powers, (for *which* no other sufficient cause than imitation can be assigned) with such an agreement in the forms of *some* characters, and the names of *all*, as to render it highly probable that they were but transcripts of the same original: under so many circumstances of resemblance as they

down. In answer to which it may be observed, that the sixth place in the Greek alphabet was originally filled up with another character, called *βav*, which had the numeral power of 6; and that this character was not merely a numeral, as some have supposed, is likely for the following reasons. First, because the epithet *ψλον* given to the Greek *τ*, would have been not only unnecessary but improper, if there had not been a character appointed for a different sound of the same letter; but this I think can be ascribed, with no degree of probability, to any other character than that of *βav*. We may argue, secondly, from the *form* of this character (*τ*) which differs very little from that of the Hebrew *Vau* reversed, as likewise from its name, that the Greeks intended it should take the literal power of *τ* as well as its numeral one; and this is farther confirmed by the name, and character, and power of the *Roman F*, which succeeded into the place of this numeral, and makes the

ALPHABETIC WRITING. 7

they appear to us, it is indeed scarcely possible to doubt it.

It was the opinion of a late learned antiquary that literal writing was invented by the Arabs, merely from the *names* of the alphabetic characters corresponding to the furniture of an Arabian tent, with

B 4 the

the sixth letter of the Roman alphabet. What other variations from the numeral powers of the Hebrew letters occur in the Greek alphabet, will appear hereafter; and it is sufficient to the argument, that these alphabets agree thus in general.

As the numeral powers of letters were undoubtedly derived at first from their order of sequence in the alphabet, it is remarkable of the *Arabic* and *Persian* alphabets, (the former of which consists of 28, and the latter of 32 letters) that those characters in them, which correspond with the Hebrew in their *vocal* powers, still do the same in their *numeral* ones, notwithstanding the difference of their situation in the series, and the interposal of many letters unknown to the Hebrew language, which letters therefore have no numeral powers assigned to them at all.

The characters of the *present* Arabic and Persian alphabets, it is true, are but of a modern date; yet

as

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the animals about it ; as the ox, the camel, the goad or spit, the drinking-cup, the hook or staple upon which they hanged their arms, the hunting-horn, the adze or battle-ax, the lappet of the curtain or tent-door, &c. That the *names* of the eastern letters were many of them borrowed from these things is indisputable ; and even allowing their *forms* likewise

as it appears from this circumstance of their numeral powers, that the Hebrew alphabet was the original whence *both* these alphabets were copied ; so it affords us a presumptive argument, that it was the original of their *more antient* alphabets likewise ; forasmuch as the numeral powers of their present letters, were much more likely to have been taken from the order of sequence in their *own* alphabets, than from that in the *Hebrew* : but if their own antient alphabets had been truly original, it is next to impossible that the order of the letters in them should have been the same with the order of the Hebrew letters ; and we may argue *e converso*, if the order of the letters in the antient Arabic and Persian alphabets coincided with the order of the Hebrew, that they certainly had all but one author. See the Second Plate, in which the order and powers of the Persian and Arabic letters are compared with those of the Hebrew alphabet.

wife to have been taken from the outlines of those objects whose names they bear, (which seems highly probable) yet still it is not difficult to conceive the tents of the Israelites in the wilderness to have presented the same objects; or if they did not, yet Moses sojourned long enough under the character of a shepherd, whilst he kept the flocks of Jethro, and led a wandering life in the Arabian valleys, to be sufficiently acquainted with them. But, in truth, the mind is barely amused here with an apparent source of the invention of alphabetic writing, from what was nothing more than an arbitrary connection of *forms*, by which to exhibit the elemental powers of Letters to the eye, *after* those powers were discovered; that is, nothing more than the adapting of a set of characters to the elements of speech already known; whereas the great difficulty of the Invention consisted in acquiring a *perfect knowledge of these elements themselves*, as a *Principle*; or, in other words, in the being so well acquainted with

with the powers and extent of human utterance, as to be able to assign a sufficient number of characters for all the variety of sounds we want in Language; I say, for *all* the sounds we want, so far only as they are necessary to convey our ideas with *clearness*; for to extend them to those minute differences of pronunciation, to which the force and elegance of speech * are principally owing, would be endless: thus far we are certain, and it is not less so, that the objects from which the forms of the Hebrew letters were taken, could never have originally suggested ideas of the sounds

* It is most undoubtedly evident, that the force as well as the elegance of speech depends much more upon an expressive Rythmus, arising from a justly varied composition of related feet, together with the *Tone*, the *Emphasis*, and the *Accent*, our words and sentences are delivered in (which no alphabetic characters can point out) than upon the meaning which is simply conveyed by the terms themselves; and as no characters *whatever* can mark the *precise* elevation of the voice for all the intermediate accents required in the most common conversation, though its utmost limits

ALPHABETIC WRITING. 11

sounds affixed to them, except in some very few instances. If we imagine *N*, the *ox*, (for example) to have suggested the sound of the broad *A*, which is the voice of the animal; and that *p* and *D*, for a similar reason, *might* have suggested those of *Q* and *X*; yet still the other elemental sounds, having no such natural relation to figure, must at first have been determined to belong to this class (the class of elemental sounds), *before* they had any arbitrary marks assigned them; and it is this *previous* discernment of all the original sounds, that are necessary to the

limits be confined nearly within the system of a Diapente including octaves; so a just ear may distinguish a great *variety* of sounds in the pronunciation of the five vowels, by attending to the continued discourse of a good speaker, beyond what may be called their *ordinary legitimate* powers; and the same is true of many consonants likewise. The Masoretic Jews admit of fourteen characters for as many different sounds of the Hebrew vowels; and if we may judge of the Hebrew language by our own, this number must have fallen very far short of the variety of their modifications.

the construction of a perfect alphabet, which seems a stretch beyond the unassisted powers of human wit. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who lived (according to Strabo) in the Augustan age, whose genius appears to have been as equal to an enquiry of this sort as any man's, acknowledges that it was not in his power to ascertain what number of letters were necessary to a compleat alphabet. This, he tells us *, had been in *vain* attempted before his time; and if it continued to be a matter of doubt and obscurity so long *after* the invention and improvement of alphabetic writing by the Greeks, what difficulties must have attended the original invention itself?

But besides this *presumption*, arising from the nature of the subject, it is highly probable, from several historical circumstances, that epistolic writing, as I think it hath been sometimes called in opposition to symbolical, was utterly unknown in the world

* On the Composition of Words, sect. XIV.

world to the time of the Exodus; and since we know that every letter of the Hebrew alphabet (except ו, which like the Grecian ο was not required to its completion, its power being only the combined powers of נ and נ) is contained within the Decalogue, written upon the tables of stone; it inclines us rather to believe, that a knowledge of the elemental sounds was supernaturally imparted to Moses immediately after the first defeat of the Amalekites*, (upon which occasion writing is first mentioned in the Scriptures) and that he invented those literal characters, which were afterwards communicated to the Israelites at the delivery of the Law. If some learned men, particularly some of the Fathers, have been of opinion that the knowledge of alphabetic writing was either supernaturally imparted to our first parents, or discovered very soon after the Creation by the effort of their own powers; their opinion rests upon the proofs they have produced, or
upon

* Exod. xvii.

upon the reasons they have assigned for it, which the writer hath not undertaken to examine; and allowing all these reasons to be valid, it might still be so far lost again in barbarism, the *natural* effect of vicious manners, or so obscured by the *judicial* Providence of God, as to stand in need of a revival. Many of the arts, we may believe, were carried to a high degree of perfection in the antediluvian world; but we meet with no relation of an alphabetic character before the Flood; what is said of the inscription upon pillars by the first Mercury from Manetho, or those of Seth mentioned by Josephus *, or the other at Joppa † by Mela, being evidently fables too ridiculous to deserve attention; nor is there any credible account of such a character, from the Flood to the arrival of the Israelites at Horeb. It may be added, that if letters had been known to the sons of Noah before their departure from Shinar, we might reasonably have

* Antiq. l. i. c. 2.

† See Purchas, b. i. ch. 7, 17.

have expected to find them amongst the Chinese, who boast an authentic series of records from the days of their pretended emperor Fohi *, and to whom they would have been ready enough to ascribe the invention, had they known it so early as their neighbours: but as the more western nations were too long possessed of it before them, to admit of such a claim, they have ever affected to despise the art of alphabetic writing, and very philosophically persist in rejecting the use of letters to this time.

There are several necessary occasions for the use of alphabetic writing, upon which

* *Fohi* is supposed, by many learned and judicious writers, to have been no other than the Patriarch *Noah*, whom the overweening vanity of the Chinese hath enrolled in the number of their Emperors. Taking this for granted, at least it shews that neither *Noah* or his sons had yet communicated the knowledge of an alphabetic character to their posterity in general, at the time of the migration into China; a circumstance which is hardly consistent with his having any knowledge of it himself.

which it is improbable to imagine it would often have been omitted, after it was generally known; and supposing it to have been known before the days of Moses, considering how exact and circumstantial a relation of antient usages and manners the Sacred History affords us, it is as unlikely to conceive the application of it, in all these cases, would have been entirely passed over unnoticed (without so much as being once spoken of) in any historical transaction, from the time of its discovery to the age in which he lived.

The first employment of letters, supposing they were of human invention, we may reasonably presume to have been in the service of the passions; that is, in the conveyance of our tender sentiments, which no symbols can express with half the force and delicacy of a written language. Business of any sort could have been but ill transacted without it at a distance, and its peculiar use in traffic

needs not to be insisted on; yet this we know was largely carried on by the Midianites, and that there was a standard, either of purity or weight, even in the days of Abraham *, to silver *current with the merchant*. Other necessary uses of an alphabetic character were in order to perpetuate, with more precision, the remembrance of certain circumstances or actions, which were proper to be conveyed to after-ages; for specifying conditions of covenant; for the conveyance of property; or for ascertaining the particulars of testamentary dispositions: and in each of these cases the uniform silence of the Scriptures to a certain period, concerning this kind of writing, though it doth not amount to an absolute proof, yet renders it highly probable that it was not known till that very time. Add, moreover, that the revelations of God to the Patriarchs, of whatever importance to Religion, were not enjoined to be re-

C

corded

* Gen. xxiii. 16.

corded till the giving of the Law; whereas, after the delivery of the Law, they were in general directed *to be written, for the generations to come*. Let us consider some particular cases, as they occur in Scripture, in support of what hath been advanced.

When Abraham * commissioned his steward to go to his own country, to take a wife for his son Isaac, he gave him no literal testimonial or credentials, as appears from all the circumstances of Eleazer's conference with Bethuel and the brother of Rebecca.

When Rebecca † sent away her favourite son into a strange land, had literal writing been familiar in that age, we may reasonably suppose he would have carried some written account from *her*, of the reasons for his departure from his father's house, accompanied with the warmest

* Gen. xxiv.

† Gen. xxviii. 7.

warmest recommendation of him to the affection of her brother; whereas he quits his native country, and trusts for a reception amongst idolaters (or infidels at least, with respect to the doctrine of redemption) to the credit of a simple narrative. It pleased God, indeed, to appear to him by the way, to support his mind under the distresses he was likely to encounter, and to reward his faith; but this was not to be *expected*: and had any letters been committed to him, considering how minute the Historian is in relating his conversation with the shepherds, and the particulars of his meeting Rachel and her father, we can hardly suppose so natural a circumstance would not have been recorded *.

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* It may not be amiss to observe here, that the character of Rebecca seems to have been commonly mistaken. She is usually represented, as governed by a cruel partiality in favour of her younger son, to the prejudice of the elder; but if we consider
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Upwards of *twenty* years at least had elapsed, from the time of Joseph's being sold into Ægypt, to the arrival of his brethren in that country, without any relation

what was revealed to her at the time of their birth (Gen. xxv. 23.); that Esau still inherited his father's substance, notwithstanding the privation of his blessing; and that Jacob was wittingly exposed, by her advice, to poverty and banishment; we may easily conceive her to have been actuated by a higher principle than blind parental fondness; as rejecting Esau for his prophaneness in despising the Priesthood, and marrying into a devoted family, the family of *Canaan*, both which actions evidently proceeded from a want of faith; and he must be considered as renouncing, by these acts, the expectation of the promises made to Abraham and to his Father. We are told in the last verse of the xxvith chapter of Genesis, that Esau's marriages were *bitterness of spirit* both to Isaac and to Rebecca; and the last verse of the xxviith chapter concludes with her pathetic lamentation of the ruin of their hopes, should Jacob follow the example of his brother: *And Rebecca said unto Isaac, My life is distressed from the faces of the daughters of Heth. Should Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as be these (namely, the*
wives

lation of his circumstances being transmitted to his father; which is not easily reconcileable with the opinion, that literal writing was then known; nor indeed can we well suppose, had this been the

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case,

wives of Esau, whom I disclaim as *my daughters*) *the daughters of the land, what good will my life do me?* or, as the words למה לי חיים may be translated literally, *Ad quid mihi viventes?* that is, What blessing can I expect in the lives of my children, who will *both* have forfeited their title to the promises of God? In this light, Rebecca's conduct appears to have been the effect of *piety*, instead of *prejudice*; and her superior affection for *one* son, to have been owing to the profligate infidelity of the *other*. She was well acquainted with the will of God concerning them *both*; the Patriarchs were not exempted from the weakness incident to age; she knew her husband's partiality; and though her conduct might in some respects be wrong, in taking consequences to herself, by the practice of deceit; upon the whole, it was but prudent, by every method possible, without the staining of her conscience, to prevent an old man, in his dotage, from attempting to defeat the designations of Providence. Accordingly we find, that Isaac did at last perceive the impropriety of his behaviour, and dismissed his younger son with the blessing of Abraham.

case, they would so imprudently have hazarded a discovery of their wickedness, by sparing his life: and when he sent home all his brethren, except Simeon, we hear of no written memorial of the terms upon which he was to be set at liberty; but they *told* their father what the *man*, the Lord of the country, had *said*, and insisted on.

A stone was consecrated to God, upon the spot where he manifested himself to Jacob; the memory of Rachel's burial-place was perpetuated by setting up a pillar; in neither case we read of any inscription. Signets, indeed, we know were in use during the lives of the Patriarchs, for Judah pledged his signet to Tamar, and Pharaoh put a signet upon the hand of Joseph; but what was the nature of their devices is altogether uncertain. It is surely inconclusive to argue from the description of the dress of the *High-Priest*, as it is given us in the
twenty-

twenty-eighth chapter of the book of Exodus, where engraving upon signets is alluded to, *after* the discovery of alphabetic writing, that signets had a *literal inscription* upon them *upwards of two hundred years before*; especially as nothing more can be collected from the words made use of upon this occasion by Moses, than that cutting precious stones, and setting them for the purposes of signature, were arts well known before the time of the Exodus, without determining what species of engraving was antiently put upon them.

With respect to covenants : The covenants between Abraham and Abimelech* were ratified in the acceptance of oxen and sheep by the latter, and by a mutual oath, without any mention being made of a written memorial. That between Jacob and Laban † was ratified by collecting a heap of stones, upon which
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* Gen. xxi. 23. xxvi. 28—31. † Gen. xxxi.

they partook of a common entertainment, and erected a pillar; and after this the agreement was concluded with an oath: *And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar which I have cast between me and thee: This heap be witness, and This pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm: The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of THEIR FATHER, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father ISAAC, and offered sacrifice to him upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread**; but we have not the least hint of

* It should seem from hence, that eating upon the heap of stones was in conformity to a mere civil rite, which had now grown into general establishment at the concluding of a treaty, and that Laban did not partake of this religious entertainment afterwards. There is a remarkable difference in the oaths here recorded, which shews the zeal of Laban in support of the old family-worship, and as steady a

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of any engraved memorial upon the pillar that was erected, not even a symbolic one; or of any written terms of agreement, upon a stone or a shell, delivered or received by either of the contracting parties.

When

determination in Jacob to adhere to the faith of his father Isaac; for Jacob calls the God of Abraham *only* to witness; whereas Laban had joined the God of Nahor, in his invocation, with the God of Abraham, particularizing whom he meant, by calling him likewise the God of *their father Terah*; intimating by this, that he was determined not to depart from the religion of their common ancestor, whom he names, without any mention of the God of *Isaac*, as a rebuke for his son-in-law's persisting in the defection which was begun by Abraham.

The character of Laban, from his behaviour in the marriage of Leah, and in changing the wages of Jacob so many times, appears to have been that of a selfish, unjust man; but *this* passage shews, that the religious difference between the family of *Nahor* and that of *Abraham* had imbittered the spirits of the former; and that therefore, had literal writing been known in the days of Isaac, Rebecca would certainly not have failed to make use of it, to soften the rugged temper of her brother, for the more benevolent reception of her son.

When Abraham purchased the field of Machpelah *, we read of no written conveyance : *He weighed unto Ephron the four hundred shekels of silver, and the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah near Mamre ; the field, and the cave that was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession, in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city, who were witnesses of the contract, and confirmed it : and thus, when Jacob purchased the right of primogeniture of his brother, there was no written memorial between them, but the contract was made, and confirmed simply by an oath.*

Testamentary requests, before the Exodus, (if this epithet may be attributed to those of the Patriarchs) were certainly
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* Gen. xxiii.

only nuncupatory; and it seems extremely probable, from the particular conduct of Abraham and Jacob, in the twenty-fourth and forty-seventh chapters of the book of Genesis, that persons intrusted with the execution of them were bound by a particular oath, the penalty of which (as may be conjectured from the manner of its being administered) was, either a temporal curse upon their own posterity, or an exclusion from the benefits of the promised seed, (in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed) if they failed to perform the will of the deceased. This was doing all that *could* be done in this case, to supply the deficiency of writing: in particular, with respect to the desire of Joseph * at *his* death, that the descendants of his brethren would carry up his bones from Ægypt, when God should visit them, to bring them into the land which he swore unto their fathers to give them; had writing then
been

* Gen. chap. l.

been known, we cannot suppose it would have been omitted upon *this* occasion.

no more par.

(The memory of such a request might be forgotten, long before the period of their deliverance arrived, without some fixt memorial; and the oath of an ancestor, long buried in his grave, perhaps, might not be thought to bind his children to the observance of what was liable to be misrepresented by tradition, however the penalty of the oath might regard *them* in its original tenor.

That we meet with no written testamentary dispositions in the Scripture, *after* the invention of letters, may be thought to invalidate the argument, from their being only nuncupatory before it; but this is to be ascribed to the peculiar spirit of the Mosaic law, which left very little discretionary power, in these matters, to the determination of private persons. The first-born son was to in-

herit the family-estate, with a double portion of his father's goods; and the remainder was to be equally divided amongst the younger children. If a man had only daughters *, they were to inherit equally; the persons with whom they were to marry, were determined by law; estates were unalienable, so long as any one of the family was living; and as to the disposal of men's bodies after death, it was a general custom for them to be buried with their fathers, and a desire to be interred in any other place would have been thought preposterous and unnatural: but these are all, or at least the *chief* ends for which testaments are necessary.

Other instances might perhaps be produced, of circumstances recorded, and covenants ratified, before the promulgation of the Law by Moses, without the mention of alphabetic writing; and since
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* Numb. xxvii. 1—12, and xxxvi. 1—10.

the Scriptures are silent upon this point, and *action* with *memorial songs* were the original manner of historical conveyance and instruction, it is no unreasonable conjecture, that letters were not published till the whole alphabet was given to the Israelites, with the *Decalogue*, from mount *Sinai*.

How long they were confined *principally* to the affairs of religion, is uncertain; they made but little popular progress during the time of the Judges, the turbulence of that period preventing an attention to any thing, beyond the necessary employments of life, to the generality of the people. An attachment to ancient customs * operated strongly the same way; and it was not, probably, till the establishment of the kingdom under *David*, that letters were in general applied to the purposes of domestic concernment, as well as to religion and affairs of state.

But

* Ruth iv. 7.

But granting that the Israelites were not acquainted with alphabetic writing, at the time of their *going down* to Ægypt; yet, since it appears to have been known to them during their abode in the wilderness, soon after the Exodus, they may still be thought (which is the most prevailing opinion) to have learned it of their masters the Ægyptians; or at least, that it was one of those arts which *Moses*, who was skilled in all the wisdom of Ægypt, had acquired in that country. It hath been already observed, that letters were most probably unknown *there* in the age of Joseph, about two hundred years before the birth of Moses; their invention by Taaut, the first Hermes, must consequently be a fiction; for that such an art, once known, should be entirely lost, with a people not absolutely degenerated into a savage life, unless obscured by Divine interposition, is hardly to be imagined: but the contradictory accounts
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in the chronological history of the Ægyptians, not to mention other arguments, sufficiently confute their pretences to the earliest use of it, as these evince it to have been unknown in Ægypt long after the giving of the Law. Such absurdities would naturally follow, from the vague interpretation of which their records, in symbolic characters *, were capable ; but could not surely have been passed so long upon the credulity of the world without detection, or haply have deceived themselves, had their public

* We learn from Horapollo, that the hawk signified, in hieroglyphic writing, either God, sublimity, excellence, humility, the wind, blood, victory, Mars, Venus, or the soul ; and that if they meant to express a sacred scribe, a prophet, an undertaker, the spleen, smelling, laughter, sneezing, an officer, or a judge, the symbol of all these was a dog, for reasons many of which appear as ridiculous as the meaning was uncertain. The reader may see a sufficient number of examples in the two books of this Author, to convince him how precarious all historic evidence must have been, which was handed down in such a manner.

lic acts been registered with the precision of alphabetic writing. To this it may be added likewise, that the wisdom brought from Ægypt by the antient Greeks, was confessedly written either in their natural or symbolical hieroglyphics, of which many precepts of Pythagoras are supposed to be, if we may so express it, a literal translation *: but Pythagoras and Herodotus † were amongst the first
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* See Plutarch's Rom. Quest. sect. 112. and Isis and Osyris, at the beginning.

† What this flowing Father of Romance asserts in his second book, concerning the pillars of Sesostris, will undoubtedly be objected; but these relations are of no more weight than those of his followers Manetho and Josephus, mentioned above. In reality his evidence, unsupported by better authority, or by the nature of the subject itself, is altogether unworthy of belief; nor would it ever have been attended to, in a doubtful matter of importance, if the sweetness of his language, and a veneration for antiquity, had not prejudiced the judgment of the learned. To translate such a history, with the utmost *faithfulness*, would effectually discredit it, notwithstanding his applauses at Olympus;

who availed themselves of the Ægyptian learning and discoveries, more than a thou-

Olympus : and Plutarch, who hath written a single essay to expose his malice, might have filled a volume with remarks on his credulity.

Upon the supposition that he actually saw some ancient monuments, which were *certainly* erected by Sesostris, and that the *sacred* character of Ægypt was properly a *literal character*, it is far from being clear that the age of Sesostris was so high as that of Moses, by many centuries ; but from the only inscription *he* hath given us, which was cut between the shoulders of a statue or of a figure, carved in bass relief, upon the road between Ephesus and Phocæa, allowing the inscription to have been coeval with this monument, it does not appear that he could more than *guess* at the person for whom it was intended. The Syriac inscriptions of Semiramis, upon Mount Bagistan, are yet more vainly urged from Diodorus, [B. 2.] to prove the earlier antiquity of an alphabetic character ; since the related fact, that there were any inscriptions at all, is far from being certain ; and it is well known, that many Queens of Assyria were distinguished by the name of Semiramis.

Ut qui regnavit sine nomine, mox Sesostris.

AUSONIUS.

And the columns of Osyris have as airy a foundation.

thousand years after the Exodus : and as it doth not appear that Ægypt was possessed of letters at the time of *their* travelling into that country, we may almost certainly conclude, that however the Ægyptians might be before their neighbours in grandeur and policy, they were later than the Greeks, whom they despised, in the knowledge of literal writing ; or, what is really disgraceful, were backward in improving the advantages of an art, without which even the pyramids are but vain and insignificant memorials.

With respect to the opinion, that letters were invented by the Arabs, *before* the time of Moses ; considering the rudeness of their life and manners, and that Ægypt * was much farther advanced in

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* It is the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton, that letters did not begin to be in use in Egypt till after the flight of the Edomites from David, about which time Cadmus brought them into Europe ; and that there is

the improvement of the arts, than any other country at this early period, where *picture-writing* especially was encouraged and improved, perhaps, as much as it was capable of improvement; considering withal the firmness and stability of the Ægyptian government, which left particular persons more at liberty to cultivate their * genius, than a wandering uncer-

no instance of characters for writing down sounds being in use, before the days of this monarch, among any other nation besides the posterity of Abraham, though he supposes letters to have been in the Abrahamic family *before* the age of Moses. But had alphabetic writing been originally invented by the Arabs, we should probably have found their favourite animal the Horse, in the number of the primitive characters; whereas, upon a supposition of their being invented by Moses at the Exodus, it was not likely to be inserted, as the Israelites at this time had no cavalry amongst them.

* There seems to have been a strange fatality attending the Ægyptian learning. The Ægyptians, doubtless, carried some of the arts and sciences, and especially † Geometry, to an astonishing height, from their

† Diod. B. I.

uncertain state of almost savage life ; we may conclude, without presumption, that if the Ægyptians were not inventors of the alphabet, as they most probably were not,

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their beginnings very early ; hastening with rapidity to a certain point, at which they stopped, without getting one step farther : and this, unless we suppose it to have been owing in some measure to the want of alphabetic writing, appears to have been the utmost boundary of their understanding. They just came short of the knowledge of letters, as they did of Painting, Statuary, and Architecture ; of which they boasted, notwithstanding, the discovery and perfection ; and claimed a superiority over other nations upon that account, which was too readily allowed them. In truth, they so much resembled what the Chinese now are, and always have been, (so far as we can trace their manners) in almost every particular, as well as pride and idolatry, as renders it highly probable they were descended from one common stock ; or, otherwise, that both these people have laboured under a similar kind of judicial blindness. In a qualified sense, the likeness might be urged as a striking *example* of the favourite opinion that prevailed in antient Ægypt, the doctrine of transmigration, which, we are told, continues to be a favourite doctrine in China to this very time. It is well known, that vanity and pride are amongst the chief motives of the Chinese,

for

it must be ascribed with much less likelihood to the invention of the ruder Arabs,

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for rejecting the advantages of alphabetic writing, which they have been so long acquainted with : how far the same narrow turn of mind prevented the antient Ægyptians from receiving it, must be left to the opinion of the reader. It is strange, if *these* availed themselves of letters, even so early as the reign of Solomon, according to the opinion of Sir Isaac Newton, that we should have no certain knowledge of their forms, by any memorials inscribed upon their buildings or obelisks ; whereas we only meet with now and then a detached scrawl, resembling the Grecian Alpha or Tau, which were probably made use of merely as hieroglyphics : and the only letters, properly so called, we can affirm to have been used as letters in Ægypt, are the Coptic. These undoubtedly were borrowed from the Greeks, but not till after the entire subversion of their antient government. *Nam post Græcorum victorias (saith Bishop Walton *) Ptolemæum linguam, cum literis Græcis, in Ægyptum intulisse nemo dubitare potest, qui libros Coptos Græcis vocabulis refertos legerit, vel ipsorum alphabetum cum Græco contulerit.* And if the number of Ægyptian letters was only twenty-five in the age of Plutarch, which he affirms in Isis and Osyris, we may probably conclude that

* Prolegom. 11. p. 7.

Hunting and war have ever been the
chief employments of this wild race of

D 4 men,

that, except the letter So, which occupies the place of *βav*, the other redundant letters, *Sdei*, *Fei*, *Chei*, *k* *Hori*, *Giangua*, *Scima*, and *Dei*, are but of a modern date. See Plate II.—Montfaucon indeed, in his second volume of *Antiquity Explained*, Plate 46, hath given us an Ægyptian inscription in small characters, very different either from their customary contracted hieroglyphics, or the Coptic letters †; but he only calls it indeterminately old, without establishing its antiquity, or telling us from whence he had it. An exact copy of this inscription is added in the Third Plate, as it is much to be wished its æra could be ascertained; and it is hoped the learned in decyphering may be induced to try it by the principles of their art, that we may know at least in what class we ought to rank its characters, whether that of the literal, syllabical, or hieroglyphic writing. Many of the characters somewhat resemble those of the old Etruscan letters, as *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *f*, *v*, *l*, *n*, *r*, *s*, and *t*, with some others of a later form. How far this circumstance may favour the opinion of the learned Kircher, concerning the *original* traduction of letters from Ægypt into Greece, must depend upon what shall appear to be the age of the inscription.

† Compare No. I. Plate 44, of the same Volume.

men, who were remarkable for despising the advantages and arts of civil society; neither planting, nor building, nor carrying on any traffic, except the accidental bartering of their spoils, and disposing of their slaves to the Midianites, who sold them again into Ægypt. Nor could writing either be much wanted or esteemed by a people *whose hand was against every man, and every man's hand against them*; and who, in general*, to this day, are utter strangers to the refined pleasures of friendship, or to any kind of tender domestic endearments.

The æra, then, of the invention of letters, properly so called, being that of the Israelites deliverance from bondage; we are no longer at a loss who the secretary of an Ægyptian King was, to whom the Greek writers in general so justly ascribe

* Dr. Shaw's Account of the Bedoween Arabs, p. 234. Baker's Reflections on Learning, ch. xvii. p. 255.

tribute it; since we know that Moses, as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and intended to succeed her father in the kingdom, may be supposed of course admitted to the knowledge of state-affairs, and might probably have had the chief administration of civil government, under Pharaoh, in all things. But as the difficulty of determining all the powers of utterance to which a most exact and critical *analysis* of the human voice was necessary, and the completion of the art of literal writing, almost at once, seem to evince that it was not discovered by the unassisted efforts of his own mind; we may not unreasonably presume it was suggested to him, at the instant, by the divine wisdom, for the immediate use of God's peculiar people; or, in other words, that the elements * of language
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* By the *elements* of language are here meant the very *beginnings* of every simple unarticulated sound from which these are produced, as lines are generated by the fluxion of a point. Now the ideas of all these
elements

(the minuteſt parts of which it is compounded, and beyond which it is incapable of being reſolved) were, as hath already been obſerved, revealed to Moſes upon the firſt arrival of the Iſraelites before Horeb; whilſt their characters, with the arrangement of them, might be left to his diſcretion. And if the manner in which the Divine Wiſdom aided the diſcovery of alphabetic writing, thus explained, appears agreeable to his uſual method of interpoſal in other caſes; particularly the related one of Prophecy, in which the ſacred Penmen were *undoubtedly* left to uſe their own accuſtomed ſtyle, that is, to the choice and arrangement of their own words; it is no way inconſiſtent

elements muſt have previously exiſted in the mind of the firſt inventor of a compleat alphabet, or it would have been impoſſible to determine what number of *elemental characters* were requiſite, to expreſs the ſeeming infinite variety of complex ſounds in every language upon earth, even in the moſt ordinary converſation.

ent with those facts the sacred History records of this transaction.

Moses was commanded to write the denunciation of God's vengeance against Amalek * in a book, immediately after the defeat of that impious nation, and to rehearse it in the ears of Joshua. This, at least, supposes him acquainted with the terms ; and although the latter part of the command was not executed, that we read of, till the people were ready to pass over Jordan †, the memorial might be written during the interval that passed between this victory, and the arrival of the Israelites at Sinah. Not to mention the *Name* of the altar raised upon this occasion, which some suppose to have been inscribed upon it, Moses is said to have written all the words, and all the judgments of the Lord, contained in the twenty-first and the two following chapters of the book of Exodus, upon his
third

* Exod. xvii. 14.

† Deut. xxv. 17.

third descent * from mount Sinah, notwithstanding the delivery of the Tables is not mentioned till the eighteenth verse of the thirty-first chapter, after God had made an end of communing with him upon the Mount the fourth time †.

Those writers who have espoused the opinion of a Divine inspiration of alphabetic

* Exod. xxiv. 4. and 7.

† These different times of Moses' going up into the Mount, are distinguished in the following passages :

First ascent.	Second asc.	Third asc.	Fourth asc.
Exod. xix. 3.	Ex. xix. 8.	Ex. xix. 20.	Ex. xxiv. 13.
First descent.	Second desc.	Third desc.	Fourth desc.
Exod. xix. 7.	Ex. xix. 14.	Ex. xix. 25.	Ex. xxxii. 15.

We may observe likewise from Exod. xx. 19. and xxiv. 12. and from Deut. v. 4. and 5. that although the promulgation of the Ten Commandments was made immediately after the third descent to the whole people, whilst Moses stood upon the plain, at the head of the congregation, by the foot of the mountain, yet that the tables of stone were not so much as *promised*, till God called him up into the Mount the fourth time.

betic writing, have in general supposed the account of these judgments to be proleptically set down, merely to favour an hypothesis, that *a knowledge of the first alphabetic CHARACTERS, likewise, was supernaturally discovered, by a miraculous impression upon the two tables of stone.* That this was really a miraculous impression hath been doubted, though perhaps *
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* The following quotations will enable the reader to determine for himself :

Exod. xxiv. 12. " And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the Mount, and be there ; and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments, *which I have written.*"

Exod. xxxi. 18. " And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinah, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, *written with the finger of God.*"

Exod. xxxii. 16. " And the *tables* were the work of God, and *the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.*"

Exod. xxxiv. 1. " And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone, like unto the first ; and *I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.*"

Exod.

without sufficient reason. But granting that the characters of the Decalogue were actually written by the finger of God, that is, imprinted by a supernatural agency,

Exod. xxxiv. 27, 28. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words, [viz. from the 9th to the end of the 26th verse] for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel; and he was there with the Lord, forty days and forty nights, he did neither eat bread nor drink water; *and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.*”

Deut. ix. 9, 10. “When I was gone up into the Mount, to receive the tables of stone, the tables of the covenant, which the Lord made with you; *then* I abode in the Mount forty days and forty nights; I neither did eat bread nor drink water: and the Lord delivered unto me two tables of stone, *written with the finger of God, &c.* And it came to pass, at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the Lord gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant.”

Deut. x. 2, 3, 4. “And *I* will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.—And I made an ark of Setim wood, and hewed the two tables of stone, like unto the first.—And *He* wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, &c.”

agency, this by no means surely proves, that Moses had not been already instructed in the *principles* of alphabetic writing, and permitted to devise these characters for their expression, as a matter of indifference; unless it can be shewn that God *could* not make use of any human characters to stamp a value upon his Laws, or that the *Mosaic* letters might not still require this mark of his approbation. That Moses might apply such forms to letters, as were likely to imprint their powers upon the mind, by connecting them with some familiar objects, is what we may suppose him capable of doing, without miraculous assistance: the symbolic characters of the *Ægyptians* had furnished him with ample *hints* to this purpose; nor was there any danger of *these* being misapplied to the purposes of idolatry, since they confessedly stood for nothing more than sounds, and had no greater likeness of the objects they resembled, than was barely sufficient for exciting the idea of their names.

names. Had *literal characters* not originally been contracted delineations of real objects, their forms, in all likelihood, would have been much more simple than we find them to have been, from the earliest ages ; such complicated figures not being *necessary* to the art of writing, and an embarrassment to the facility of its execution ; but which, though *permitted* or *authorised* by Providence, in the infancy of this discovery, were doubtless afterwards continued in the oriental nations, chiefly from the influence of custom. And if what hath been observed concerning the particular forms of some letters, as connected with their names, in the beginning of this Essay, be allowed ; it seems to determine the dispute about priority between the Hebrew and Samaritan characters, in favour of the former ; forasmuch as, though the letters of both alphabets retain the same names, the resemblances of those things whose names they carry are much more difficult to be

traced in the Samaritan than in the Hebrew characters, except in one or two instances only, if indeed it be possible, at this day, to trace them out with certainty in either ; nor were it to be wondered at should the resemblances be utterly worn out in such a length of time, if we consider how much of original likeness is lost in every successive copy from a drawing, even by the best artists *.

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* At what time letters were introduced to Persia, is a fact about which we can form no conjecture ; but several inscriptions, taken from the ruins of the palace of Persepolis, which is said to have been built near seven hundred years before the Christian æra, seem to be written in the most simple literal characters (if they are to be considered as such) of any we are acquainted with ; from which it appears also, that the Persians sometimes wrote in perpendicular columns, after the manner of the Chinese and ancient Ægyptians (the latter of whom might borrow it from the Æthiopians, as Diodorus, in his second book, says they did their letters) ; and it is most probable that they began, like them, from the right hand.

To ask why the Almighty did not communicate the whole art of written language, with all its subsequent improvements at once, or why communicate thus much of it no sooner, are enquiries with which we have nothing to do. In this case, as in all the other sciences, only the first *principles* are given or implanted in the mind, which are left for their improvement to our own industry and attention ; and whether we consider the powers of the human mind themselves, which are gradually strengthened

hand. Writing in perpendicular columns, was originally taken from memorials upon the stems of trees, or pillars, or obelisks ; and the inscriptions of this kind at Persepolis, which some have even supposed to be antediluvian from their singularity, and our learned Dr. Hyde to have been mere whimsical ornaments, may perhaps at last be found no other than some fragments of Ægyptian antiquity, taken by Cambyfes from the spoils of Thebes.—See Webb's Enquiry concerning the Primitive Language, p. 149, 190. Hyde's Rel. of the Ant. Pers. Appendix. Diod. Sic. b. ii. sect. 57. b. iii. sect. 3. & 4.

ened and delighted with pursuit; or whether we look back to those particular periods, which might call for such progressive advances as were suited to different states and circumstances of the world; it would not be difficult to assign a sufficient number of final causes for this proceeding, highly worthy of the wisdom and the goodness of God.

Symbolic writing, amongst the Ægyptians, may reasonably be presumed to have been one * source of their idolatrous worship, with which the Israelites were infected at the coming out from Ægypt; the establishment, therefore, of an alphabetic character, at this period, was intended probably to put a stop to the progress of the contagion: and this was farther guarded against by the command of God, to make to *themselves* no images whatever, to bow down before them as the symbols of his per-

E 2

son.

* Abbe Pluche's History of the Heavens.

son *. This is afterwards explained as follows :

When

* It is mortifying to reflect upon the abuse of Images or Pictures, when they have been any way connected with Religion ; how soon they passed from emblems or memorials only, to real objects of respect and reverence ; and I should not be sorry to see them utterly banished from the churches of Protestants. Men of sense, who are unprejudiced, consider them as what they are ; but in *every* country, the bulk of mankind are liable to the very same mistakes with the Ægyptians, and Churchmen sometimes are disposed to wink at what appears at first a harmless zeal, till it gradually leads them into absolute idolatry. At least, no representations of the Supreme Being, of Saints or Angels, should be allowed ; all Madonas, and Salutations, and Crucifixes, and Holy Families, should be forbidden ; nor any other figures introduced, than such imaginary characters as the parables of the Old or New Testament present us with ; and even these not without a written explanation annexed. Strype, in his Annals, has given us a very remarkable conversation upon this subject, between Queen Elizabeth and the Dean of her Majesty's Chapel, which deserves more attention than hath since been usually paid to it. See ch. 23.—I shall take the liberty of quoting here a passage from an account of the catastrophe of Lisbon, in the year 1755, written by a
Father

When the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire, saith Moses, ye heard the voice of his words, but ye saw no similitude [or symbol], only ye heard a voice ;

E 3

take

Father of the Oratory, and inscribed to his Highness the Duke of Lafoens, cousin-german to the present King of Portugal, and shall leave the reader to his own remarks upon it. After describing the effects of the first shock of the earthquake, which filled the streets and alleys with the dying and the dead, our Author adds the following observations: “Nusquam tamen major, nusquam fædior strages fuit, quam in templis ; utpote quò ob diei celebritatem, maxima virorum fæminarumque multitudo convenerat : alibi igitur quinquaginta, alibi centum, alibi plures, alibi pauciores interiire, pro qualitate scilicet ædificiorum, locorum, et ruinarum. *In quâ calamitate pios ac religiosos animos MAXIME percellebat sacrarum imaginum acerbus casus ; quarum aliæ penitus conscissæ & laceratæ sunt, aliæ ruinis obrutæ, aliæ flammis absumptæ. Ex his memorandum imprimis est, nobile simulacrum Christi Domini crucem ferentis, apud beatam Virginem Mariam a gratiâ Eremitarum Sancti Augustini, EXIMIA Lusitanorum Regum, Procerum, totiusque populi VENERATIONE percelebre ; ob idque quotannis per urbem circumferri solitum sacro tempore,” &c. Antonij Pererix de Terræ Motu & Incendio Olisiponenfi Commentarius, p. 6. Londini, typis G. Hawkins, 1756.*

take therefore good heed to yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the likeness of male or female. And the following detail seems, in the most particular manner, to point at those hieroglyphic figures which the children of Israel are supposed to have made use of, in common with the Ægyptians, before the Exodus: The likeness of any beast that is on the earth; the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air; the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground; the likeness of any fish that is in the waters; and lest thou lift up thine eyes to heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, thou shouldst be driven to worship them, and to serve them which the Lord thy God hath imparted to serve all the nations under the whole heaven: for the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace,*

* Webb's Essay on the Primitive Language, p. 149. and Hearnius quoted by Purchas, b. i. ch. 17.

*furnace, out of Ægypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance as from that day *.*

His all-seeing Providence, ever watchful for our good, hath appointed a precise time for every event. What is usually denominated Chance, which seems alone to have operated in a number of the most plain and obvious inventions, is but an unseen direction ; and nothing can be found out, till God himself shall place it in a proper point of view, and open mens' eyes to see it in this new light. But if this be true, as it respects the common arts of life, it is by no means inconsistent with the dignity of the Divine Nature, to suppose his more extraordinary influence concerned in a discovery of such infinite importance.

One objection still remains to be considered ; namely, that if this be the case, we should certainly have had some ac-

E 4 count

* Comp. Exod. ch. xx. with Deut. ch. iv.

count of so extraordinary an affair delivered to us in the Scriptures. To which we have only to say, That Providence hath not thought proper to fix the date of many things as extraordinary, or to give us the *reasons* of his determinations in others. The command to *sacrifice*, for instance, is not mentioned till many years after the practice was established. The same may be said with regard to the distinction of clean and unclean beasts ; and with respect to language, which is nearer to the present case, it is the opinion of the most judicious writers, that it was originally inspired * ; and yet this is no
where

* It was the philosophy of Epicurus, that the first men crawled out of the ground in no better condition than other animals, without speech or reason ; and that the earliest use they made of their understanding was, to gratify the malignity of the selfish passions by inventing weapons of mischief :

Mutum & turpe pecus, glandem atq; cubilia propter
Unguibus & pugnis, dein fustibus, atque ita porro
Pugnabant armis, quæ post fabricaverat usus ;

where told us in express terms, though the fact may be deduced from the second chapter

Donec verba quibus voces sensusque notarent,
Nominaque invenere ; dehinc absistere bello
Oppida moliri, leges incidere, &c.

Without having recourse to Revelation, whoever considers how much the exertion of our rational and social powers depends upon the influence of language, may discover the propriety of its having been *originally inspired*, since otherwise the picture here drawn might have been too like. But the case, I think, appears to have been different from what the Poet fancied. We are told, in the second chapter of the book of Genesis, that the *Lord God having formed* out of the ground every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, brought them unto Adam, *to see* what he would call them ; where the word לראות, translated *to see*, signifies *to make trial of*, or *to acquire knowledge by experiment*, in like manner as when Noah sent a dove out of the ark, it was to *try* whether the waters were abated ; where the sacred historian makes use of the same term. And the meaning of it in this place seems to be, that *God brought the animals into the presence of the first man*, and caused them to continue about him, either that Adam by himself might *try* or *make experiment* of his proficiency in Language, already imparted to him, by the exercise of his

chapter of the book of Genesis. The abolition of symbolic writing, by an express

his vocal powers; or else in order to assist his first trials in the beginnings and rudiments of Language; that is, to direct his understanding in the application of such sounds, to denote the several creatures, as were in some degree significant of their respective *movements or voices*, and which might afterwards become the ground-work of diffusive speech, the greatest part of which must necessarily be metaphorical. *The first words of men, like their first ideas, saith the learned author of Hermes*, had an immediate reference to sensible objects; and men took those words which they found already made, and transferred them by metaphor to intellectual conceptions.* Thus צפר [tsper], expressive of the chirping of small birds, signifies any small bird, the sparrow, day-break, to depart early, &c. חור [tur], the voice of the turtle, the bird itself, to fly round, to explore, a merchant, &c. גור [gur], expressive of the growling of a beast of prey, signifies a savage whelp, a stranger, and to be afraid; קרא [quera], the call of the partridge, signifies the bird herself, and to invoke; דרר [derr], the swallow, a name taken from the sound of its wings in hovering, signifies liberty; ערג [org], the voice of the stag in groining, signifies the animal itself, and to be hoarse with thirst, &c. It is absurd

* Hermes, b. ii. p. 269.

express command of God in the Decalogue, was sufficiently striking to the Israelites,

to say, because names are arbitrary, that therefore there is no congruity between sounds and things: ὁ δὲ μὲν πρῶτος τὰ ὀνόματα, ὅτι ἠγέτο εἶναι τὰ πράγματα, ΤΟΙΑΥΤΑ εἶδετο καὶ τὰ νομματα, was the opinion of Plato, who is said to have made the first attempt * amongst the Greeks to trace back words to their original causes, and who hath supported the opinion, that they were imitations of some qualities and affections of things, by an entertaining analysis in the Dialogue named Cratylus. The fact, indeed, might be evinced by numberless examples in every language, where words are radically imitative either of *sounds* or *motions*. But still the inhabitants of the world must have long continued in a wretched state of almost brutal converse, notwithstanding this imitative connection of vocal sounds, had not God himself been graciously pleased to assist the first pair in the establishment of Language; and we may therefore reasonably conclude that he did so. Whether it will be thought to strengthen the opinion, must be left to the reader; but we may remark, that the author of the Arabic Version hath rendered the word לָמַד, *to try*, in the second chapter of Genesis, by a word which signifies to point out or instruct, as it is translated in Ep. Walton's Polyglott, *ut ostenderet ei quid vocaret*

* Dionys. on the Comp. of Words, sect. xvi,

Israelites, at the time it was given, to perpetuate the æra of letters amongst *them*; and with regard to future ages, and *other* nations, the narration of the fact, as it stands recorded in all its circumstances, renders what hath been advanced exceedingly probable. If this answer be not thought sufficient, let the objection have its full force.

We now proceed to enquire how literal writing, which must soon have gotten the better of symbolical, made its way into Europe. The first people who availed themselves of this discovery were the Syrians that lived in the neighbourhood of the Israelites, who were often confounded* with them, as indeed all the inhabitants

vocaret ea. Men are strangely cautious of allowing the Divine Being to have given a vocal language to mankind, though he hath undoubtedly imparted to us another, which is common to all the nations of the world, and intelligible even to infants.

* Gale's Court of the Gentiles, b. i. ch. 3 and 4.

habitants of the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean have been with each other.

From the Syrians * it was communicated to the Phœnicians, who changed the Hebrew characters into what, we may presume, were afterwards called the Samaritan; but whether they did this for the purposes of vanity altogether, or for what other end, is not clear. Be it as it may, their having introduced letters to the Greeks hath given them the general credit of the invention, notwithstanding a prevailing opinion, that writing was originally practised in Ægypt; for the Phœnicians are said to have been the first who instituted characters for the elements of speech, which gave a *perpetuity to sounds*, and which differed from
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* Σύροι μὲν εὐρέται τῶν γραμμάτων εἰσι, παρὰ δὲ τούτων Φοίνικες μάδοντες τοῖς Ἕλλησι παραδεδώκασιν· ὅτοι δ' εἰσιν οἱ μετὰ Κάδμου πλεύσαντες εἰς τὴν Εὐρώπην. κτλ. Diod. b. v. sect. 74. and a similar account is given us by Herodotus in Terpsichore.

the Ægyptian picture-writing, not only in respect of their objects, but in the rudeness of the figures. Thus much is to be understood from Lucan *, whose expression is remarkable :

Phœnices primi, famæ si creditur, ausi
Mansuram rudibus vocem signare figuris,
 Nondum flumineas Memphis contexere biblos
 Noverat; et saxis tantùm volucresque feræque,
 Sculptaque servabant magicas animalia linguas.

“ Et si famæ libet credere,” saith Curtius †, after having related the siege of Tyre, “hæc gens literas prima aut docuit, aut didicit.”

Aristotle (according to Pliny ‡) hath asserted, that eighteen letters were brought by Cadmus from Phœnicia into Greece; whilst Plutarch § and some others tell us, that he introduced no more than sixteen ;
 yet

* Phars. l. iii.

† L. iv. c. 4.

‡ Nat. Hist. l. vii. c. 56. § Sympos. b. ix. prob. 2, 3.

yet who this Cadmus was, at what time he lived, or whether *any particular* person is to be understood by this name, which implies an Asiatic, or man from the East, remains a doubt amongst the learned. Most of the Greek and Roman authors agree in this, That Greece was not the region that gave birth to alphabetic writing; whilst others assert the Greeks to have invented the very letters which these attributed to Cadmus; assigning them to Cecrops, or to Linus *, or to Palamedes, as their prejudices operated in favour of Argos, or Thebes, or Athens. “ Quidam Cecropem Atheni-
 “ ensium, vel Linum Thebanum,” saith Tacitus, “ et temporibus Trojanis Pala-
 “ medem Argivum memorant, sexdecim
 “ literarum *formas*; mox alios, ac præci-
 “ puum Simonidem, *cæteras* reperisse †.”

The general opinion upon this apparent contradiction is, that it arose from
 the

* Diodorus Siculus, b. iii. sect. 66. † Tacitus I. xi. c. 14.

the national vanity of the Greeks, who were always ready to claim some share of merit, at least, in every thing that did honour to human nature, and (as the last cited author observes of the Phœnicians) were ambitious to be thought inventors of what they had acquired only from the information of others. But here we ought to make a distinction between their pretences to the original invention of *literal* writing, in opposition to the *symbolical*, and the invention only of new characters; and it is to be observed, that Tacitus is not speaking of the elemental *sounds* of letters, but merely of the *forms* by which they were called up and made present to the mind; which may very justly be said to be invented by the Greeks, notwithstanding their having been instructed in alphabetic writing by the Phœnicians before. It is astonishing to observe, how much ingenious men are disposed to follow one another in the same track, without making observations for themselves. Nothing is
more

more common than to derive the Latin characters, as well as the Greek, from those of the Samaritan or Hebrew alphabets, without distinguishing between the elemental *types* and the elemental *sounds*; and it is pleasant enough to remark after what manner the resemblance of the figures is made out, and how mens eyes are liable to become the dupes of a prejudiced imagination.

The sixteen letters brought into Greece by Cadmus were undoubtedly no other than what he had been acquainted with in Phœnicia, that is, the common Hebrew or Samaritan; some few of which, after being reversed for the sake of writing from left to right, as the more agreeable and expeditious movement of the hand or arm from the body outward, were still retained by the Greeks; though their writing *βερεροφιδον*, or in returning lines, as ploughmen drive their oxen a different way at each end of the fur-

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row,

row, continued at least to the time of Solon, whose laws were written after this manner.

In an assignment of characters to the elemental sounds by Moses, it was natural for him to take contracted figures of the most familiar objects for this purpose, whose names respectively began with the sounds to be pointed out by them; and a very slight resemblance of such figures to their objects would excite and call up an idea of their vocal powers: but it is evident that this would not continue to be the case with the same characters in a different language. The Oriental names of the letters, taken from those of the objects they resembled, which names the Greeks retained with very little alteration, could of course have no connection with their powers amongst *them*. Though the figure of א, *i. e.* aleph or alpha, according to the Syriac or Chaldaic termination, for instance, gave an idea of the

OX

ox* to the inhabitants of the Eastern coasts of the Mediterranean, the *Grecian* name of this creature would not have had the power of calling up the sound of A, but that of B, the primary element of $\beta\epsilon\varsigma$. \beth [Bit or Bitā], the tent, or house, in like manner, whatever resemblance of such a structure it might carry with it, would doubtless have excited an idea of the primary sound of $\omicron\mu\iota\chi\rho\omicron\nu$ or $\sigma\iota\gamma\mu\alpha$ to the Greeks; that is, the primary sound of $\omicron\iota\chi$ or of $\sigma\kappa\eta\nu\eta$, rather than that of B. \beth [Gemel], or the Camel, was an animal, in all probability, unknown in Greece; and supposing the shape of this letter to have originally resembled the form, as its name does the voice of the animal, it could

F 2

still

* It appears likely, from the second problem of the ninth book of Plutarch's *Symposiacs*, that although the Greeks were not unacquainted with the signification of the word $\alpha\lambda\phi\alpha$, they were strangers to the true reason of its name being assigned to this letter at the time he wrote, whatever was the case with their antient Grammarians.

still have no sort of relation to any sound whatever, with a people who were strangers to them both. What is said of these three letters may justly be applied to others. It therefore became necessary for the Greeks, if they chose to retain the original names of the Cadmean letters, to alter their forms in such a manner, as to give them some new associated connection with the elemental sounds they stood for, grounded either upon reasons respecting their own tongue in particular, or upon some *general principle* common to all languages whatever.

It is very obvious to remark in this place, upon the Greeks having retained the oriental names of the letters, that as this circumstance points out the country from whence they received them, so it contributed in some degree to the propagation of knowledge, by connecting their own with the oriental alphabets; hereby rendering it less difficult to communicate their improvements in morality and Science,

ence, and return the obligation back again to their teachers.

But besides this agreement in the *names* of the letters, which were acknowledged as foreign words, by not being inflected in Greek, it appears a conclusive argument, which hath only just been hinted, for the several alphabets mentioned in the ~~second and third~~ page of this Dissertation having been copied from one original, that the same letters, without any regard to the organs upon which the formation of their respective sounds depends, follow each other in the same order in them all; which undoubtedly would not have been the case, had those different nations which dispute the honour of having invented letters, been the inventors of any thing beyond the mere characters of their respective alphabets.

fifth

8

Nature, it is true, is delighted with variety, and is uniform in the production

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of

of it ; but such unanimous *confusion* could never have proceeded from any fixt principle of her establishing. That letters were separately invented at different times, in the order we now find them, is a supposition neither supported by any evidence, nor is very probable ; and every *original* inventor, to whose mind the whole number of elemental sounds was present, if we suppose alphabetic writing to have been invented at distant periods, and in different countries, and completed in each ; every original inventor, we may presume, after distributing the characters of the elemental sounds, according to their several orders, first into vowels and consonants, and these again into dentals, labials, and palatines, &c. would have arranged them separately in their different classes ; and we should have found precedence given to the labials or dentals in *one* country, which was given to the palatines in *another*. The vowels, most probably, would have followed each other without any intervening consonants,

consonants, and have been set at the head of the alphabet by one person*, whilst another would have placed them after the consonants: but a general agreement in the position of these classes, and much less in the position of the whole series of letters, without any regard to their specific differences, could never have proceeded from any thing but imitation†.

Why the Mosaic letters were arranged in this confused, disjointed series at first, would be difficult to say. Perhaps it may be sufficient to observe, that supposing their discovery had been solely owing to the natural powers of the human mind, these divisions of the elemental sounds, according to their different organs, would have preceded the invention of the *whole* alphabet; whereas this circumstance might not at all be attended

F 4 to,

* Plut. Symp. b. ix. prob. 2.

† See p. ~~25~~⁵ note, and plate II.

to, taking the knowledge of them to have been instantaneously inspired: and in this case we might expect to find such distinctions overlooked, in assigning the order of the *first* characteristic figures to the sounds of the *first* alphabet.

But although the distinction of letters into classes, according to their difference of pronunciation, was most probably overlooked at this time, yet the facility with which the names of the Hebrew characters succeed each other in the series (where we find the closing sound of each preceding name to prepare the organs for the utterance of that which is to follow) seems to shew, that *this* was not a matter wholly disregarded; and which alone might possibly determine their succession with the inspired author. Thus, for instance, *Alep* closes the lips, and *Bit* opens them; the position of the tongue, in uttering the *t* in *Bit*, prepares it with the same aperture of the lips to pronounce the *g*, which begins the name
of

of the third letter; *l*, in *Gemel*, doth the same with respect to *Delet*; and the observation holds in general throughout the series. And as this is not the case with the letters of the other Eastern alphabets, whose terminations varied from the Hebrew, though they still follow in the same order without any such reason for it (or any other reason that we know of), this single circumstance is an argument for the priority of the Hebrew alphabet, above all others we are acquainted with, though it doth not absolutely prove its originality.

That the Greeks were under some necessity of altering the *forms* of the oriental letters, so long as they retained their *names*, is clear from what hath been already said. Let us now enquire what method they pursued, to give these new characters a natural relation to what may strictly be called the *matres orationis*, the elemental sounds of speech for which they stood.

Dionyfius

Dionysius of Halicarnassus hath described the Grecian manner of pronouncing all the letters of the alphabet, in his Treatise on the Composition of Words *, with the utmost clearness; and his account of the positions of the organs in their utterance answers, in most instances, so nearly to the outlines of the letters themselves, that whoever is but moderately skilled in drawing can have very little doubt of their being delineated from them, and designed for their representations. These resemblances, it is true, were less and less regarded, and gradually grew fainter, as the necessity of attending to them diminished, by the knowledge of alphabetic writing becoming common, and from the little care which men of genius, in all ages after the general introduction of letters, have bestowed upon this mechanic part of Science. Yet still enough of likeness
is

* Sect. xiv.

is to be traced out at present in the forms of fifteen letters of the twenty-four ; namely, *Alpha*, *Beta*, *E-psilon*, *Dseta*, *Tbeta*, *Iota*, *Mu*, *Nu*, *Kfi*, *O-mikron*, *Pi*, *Sigma*, *U-psilon*, *Pbi*, and *O-mega*, to establish the conjecture upon a tolerable foundation of probability with respect to *these*. Two of the remaining nine, namely, *Cbi* * and *Pfi*, are but arbitrary marks

* The powers of *Cbi* and *Kappa* are so nearly related, that the figure of each might possibly be taken from the Samaritan letter **X**, which answered to the Hebrew כ, whose power, according to Bp. Walton, was either that of a simple or an aspirated K. — I am nevertheless of opinion, that this resemblance of the Grecian Kappa to the Samaritan Kep, should rather be considered as accidental ; and that the straight and bending lines, which constituted the most antient form of the Greek **K** (at least of the Etruscan), were designed to shew the curvature of the tongue, which is elevated into an arch, and pressed against the roof of the mouth thus **⋈**, in order to produce the power of this letter, the upper line denoting the situation of the palate. The whole figure's being either supine, or erected, or reversed, or found in any other awkward situation, instead of being prostrate, is no sufficient objection to the likelihood of the conjecture.

marks of much later Greek extraction, invented purely for the sake of expeditious writing; and for the rest, which carried only *simple* sounds, *their* pronunciation not being so easy to be pointed out by any representation of the organs of speech, the characters assigned to them were taken from the characters of the Eastern alphabet, with very little variation.

Without giving ourselves the trouble to consider the weight of different authorities for the precise number of letters introduced at first by Cadmus; or attempting to account for the transposition of Upsilon in the modern Greek alphabets; or at what time the Digamma of the Æolians assumed the original place of the Hebrew Vau, with the power of the consonant V, or the Roman F; we shall take it for granted, that the Greek alphabet at first ended at T, and that it consisted of twenty letters only, corresponding in their powers to those of the Hebrew,

brew, the Samaritan, and the Syriac letters placed beside them, in the first Plate. It is reasonable to believe, that the aspirated Pi and Kappa (that is, Φ and χ), were next added to this number, after the invention of the vowel Υ , or υ - ϕ ιλον *, which now supplies the use of the Vau, or consonant V likewise; and lastly, that the double letters, Ψ and Ω , completed the established series.

The first and second columns of Samaritan letters in this Plate are taken chiefly from the learned Dr. Gregory Sharp's Dissertation on the Origin of Languages, to which the writer is indebted for several of the foregoing observations, and the third from Bishop Walton: which of the three was the most antient, is submitted to the reader; but it is evident the Greeks copied the chief traces of the few Cadmean letters they retained, from the column on the left hand. That the
Hebrew

* See Note, page 3.

- 7 Hebrew letters, א, ב, ג, ד, and ה, whose vocal powers are most likely to be controverted, were vowels, and not consonants, might be shown from the general suffrage of the best writers upon the Hebrew language; and however the learned may sometimes differ with regard to the precise vocal powers of these letters in particular, or those of some consonants, yet the absurd opinion was not entertained, that the only letters truly *vocal*, in the Hebrew alphabet, were absolutely *mute*, without the addition of other characters, till refinement, and mystery, and difficulties of every kind were considered as inseparable from an inspired writing. And we may observe, concerning the *whole series* of the Hebrew letters, that as the correspondence in their *numeral* powers with the Greek letters, shews the Greek alphabet to have been borrowed from the *Hebrews* (for no one can be so absurd as to suppose the Hebrew alphabet was borrowed from the Greek), so it is highly probable, that the *vocal* powers of
of

of the Greek letters differed very little from the *vocal* powers of the Hebrew letters at the time of their traduction : and we may fairly presume, in a matter of so little importance as the true pronunciation of a dead language, without having recourse to the authority of Josephus, or Origen, or Jerom (however respectable these names may be thought), that if we know the *vocal* powers of the Greek letters, of which there can be no reasonable doubt, we are at the same time sufficiently acquainted with the original *vocal* powers of the Hebrew, as they were pronounced before the changes they may have undergone since the destruction of the Jewish state *.

Of these four-and-twenty characters then, as hath been said, it is conceived, that only seven were copied from the
alphabet

* See Bp. Walton's Three Preliminary Dissert. sect. 38 and 49 ; and Dr. Sharp's on the Original Powers of Letters.

alphabet of Cadmus, which still retain some strokes of their original forms ; and that fifteen of the rest were intended to facilitate the study of letters, properly so called, in opposition to symbols, by exhibiting a kind of images (if we may be allowed the expression) of their vocal powers, and rendering these in some measure the objects of our sight as well as hearing.

The seven letters whose original figures were retained by the Greeks with very little variation, are these which follow :

Gamma, Delta, Eta, Kappa, Lambda, Rho, and Tau.

Γ Δ Η Κ Λ Ρ Τ

Gamma is undoubtedly the Samaritan 7 *Gemel* or *Gemla* reversed.

Delta is the Samaritan Δ *Delet* or *Delta*.

Eta

Eta, which was originally no more
 than an aspirate* amongst the Greeks, is
 G evidently

* E-pfilon, which succeeded in the place of the Hebrew π , was for some ages used to express both the long and short sound of the letter *e* amongst the Greeks; and whilst it continued to hold this *double* power, the *Eta* preserved its original sound, which was only an aspiration, like that of π in Hebrew, or the Samaritan \aleph . But when in after-times they thought proper to give the power of the long *e* to the letter H (which later Grammarians might conceive to have been its original sound, from the resemblance it bears to two E's turned towards each other, (EH), the short E was then called E- ψ λον, in opposition to it, and it became necessary to add a *new* character for the aspirate, the form of which was borrowed from that of the Hebrew Cheph reversed. Bentley's *Dissert. upon Phalaris*, p. 241.

In the Roman alphabet H reassumed its primitive power of an aspirate *only*, and E with them stands indifferently for the long or short sound of this letter, as it did at first with the Greeks.

The reader is here referred to the inscriptions upon the Thebaic Tripods, mentioned in the fifth book of Herodotus, and to the Sigeon Inscription originally
 published


evidently the Samaritan H Hit, as the lesser *n* is the Hebrew aspirate *ן*.


Kappa

published by Dr. Chishul in his Asiatic Antiquities; copies of all which may be seen in the First Volume of Dr. Shuckforth's Connection.


The Sigean Inscription, so often quoted to ascertain the forms of the antient Greek letters, is cut upon a block of marble nine feet long, and two feet square, which was the pillar of an Hermean statue, and at present is made use of for a seat before the door of a Greek church not far from the Sigean promontory. It is supposed to be considerably above two thousand years old, for which, and its being a complete specimen of writing *βασειλοφειδος*, it is chiefly valuable; since all it acquaints us with is, that one Phanodocus, to whom the statue was erected, had presented a bowl and stand, with a strainer, to the Public Hall of the city Sigeum, whose site was that of the village in which the stone now lies.

Those who are the least acquainted with the heathen rites of sacrifice, are not to be informed, that the bowl and stand here intended were a kind of tripod, serving as a moveable altar, the legs of which were so contrived, as to approach nearer, or to separate farther from each other, for the more conveniently receiving vessels of different sizes. The reader
may

Kappa is no very distant resemblance of the Samaritan  *Kep*.

Lamda is the Samaritan  *Lemed* erected.

Ro is their reversed  *Ris*. And

Tau borrows both its name and shape from  a brand or hammer (which is the Samaritan form of it), and whose distant sound very aptly expresses the power of the letter.

Let us now consider the forms of the remaining fifteen letters, which we suppose to have been a new kind of picture-writing (*εν γράμμασι μίμησις*, in the strictest sense), that served to point out sounds instead of things.

G 2

These

may acquire a perfect idea of their construction, from a draught in Scacchi's *Myrothecium*, which shews their form to have been extremely elegant; and we know that they were often made of the most valuable materials.

These fifteen letters consist of,

Six vowels, α, ε, ι, ο, ω, υ.

Four labials, β, μ, π, φ.

Three linguals, ζ, θ, ν.

And two dentals, ξ and σ.

To begin with the vowels. These, according to Dionysius *, are all pronounced by the disposition of the lips † only, without any *movement* of the tongue in utterance, the air collected in the trachæa being gently forced outward.

Alpha was pronounced with a considerable aperture of the mouth (ανοιγομένη τοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ πλεῖστον), and the air directed against the palate. Now nothing could

* Sect. xiv.

† It appears from hence, that all the vowels, as well as γ, might very properly have been termed labials, although this being more distinguishably such, is the only one of them that is usually ranked in this class. Εκφραίνεται δὲ τὰντα πάντα, τῆς ἀρετῆς συν-
χέσης τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ σώματ' ἀπλῶς σχηματισθέντ', τῆς
τε γλώσσης ἔδῃν πραγματευομένης, ἄλλ' ἡρεμῆσης.

could more exactly represent the opening of the lips in profile for the purpose, than the character of this letter reclined, in which the cross bar delineated or pointed out the situation of the teeth; though this letter, as well as several others, was afterwards erected for the sake of taking up less room.

Ⲑ ⲑ Ⲓ ⲓ

Epsilon is pronounced by a moderate aperture of the lips, the tongue being placed straight out, so as to give the air, forced from the trachæa, a *direct* passage, neither throwing it upwards or downwards; and this position of the tongue, nearly at an equal distance from the roof and bottom of the mouth, was pointed out by the middle stroke in the center of the curved line, or between the parallel lines in the square letter.

Ⲕ ⲕ Ⲍ ⲍ

G 3

Iota

Iota was reckoned the meanest of all the vowels, as it received no advantage or increase of sound from the lips, which were but just opened in the pronouncing of it, and were therefore character'd by a simple, straight, horizontal line, which was afterwards erected for the reason above given. Ἐσχάτου δὲ πάντων τὸ Ι, faith Dionysius, μικρὸν ανοιγόμενον τῷ στόματι.



I

Omikron is so generally allowed to have borrowed its form from the position of the lips in uttering it, as to need no explanation*.



O-mega

* Quintilian observes, that Omikron stood for the long and short *o*, and it appears from the Sigeian inscription, that it was used both for *o* and *ω*, as well as its own simple sound : all which shews the character of *ω* to have been of later invention.—Quint. de Institut. Orat. l. i. c. 7. Shuckf. Conn. vol. I. p. 256, 265.

O-mega exhibited the hollow of the mouth in profile, with the lips thrust forward as in speaking: σπρουγύλλεται τε γὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ στόμα, καὶ περιστέλλει τὰ χεῖλη.

Ω

Ω

U-psilon was esteemed one of the meaner vowels, though superior to *iota*. Its sound was produced by a remarkable contraction of the lips, which choaked the voice, and rendered it weak and thin: περὶ γὰρ αὐτὰ τὰ χεῖλη, συστολῆς γενομένης ἀξιολόγῃς, πνίγεται, καὶ σενὸς ἐκπίπτει ὁ ἦχος. The form of *this* letter, therefore, was evidently a delineation of the lips in its utterance, which it was hardly possible to mistake in its proper situation. It hath been observed before, that this letter is reckoned in the number of the *labials*, which come next under our consideration; and its original shape has undergone little alteration.

Υ

Υ

Υ

The remaining consonant labials are four; namely, *Beta*, *Mu*, *Pi*, and *Pbi*; all which require the lips to be compressed and thrust forward in their utterance; and their respective characters are as similar to each other, as it was consistent with a necessary distinction to permit: which would hardly have been the case, had not the position of the organs in their pronunciation given the outlines of their forms. For these the slightest sketches will be hints sufficient.

Beta was a delineation of the lips in profile, in the natural situation of the head.

B B B β

Mu exhibited them turned upwards.

m M M μ

Pi was their inverted profile.

W U Π π

And

And *Pbi* was a drawing of the lips as they appear in front, which was erected for the sake of taking up less room.



Zeta and *Nu* may be considered both as palatines and linguals.

Z

N

Zeta (the sound of which seems to be compounded of the sounds of δ and σ *) is pronounced by raising the tip of the tongue

* Dionysius saith, the power of Z was compounded of the powers of σ and δ ; but the difficulty of sounding σ before δ , and σ , according to the same author, being sounded *after* π , in the double sound of ξ , and *after* π , in the double sound of ψ , should incline us rather to suspect an error in the Text, and that δ ought to be first heard in the pronunciation of *this* letter. The corruption of $\delta\nu\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu$ into $\zeta\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu$, and of $\delta\eta\mu\iota\omega\delta\epsilon\varsigma$ into $\zeta\eta\mu\iota\omega\delta\epsilon\varsigma$, mentioned by Plato in his *Cratylus*, seems to confirm this opinion. As the Greeks changed the Delta into Zeta, or $\delta\varsigma$, so the Romans, in many words derived from the Greek, changed Zeta into *j*, which is a double letter, compounded

tongue towards the roof of the mouth, near the bottom of the gum, and after a short confinement of the air, letting it pass down through the teeth. The character of this letter, therefore, was designed to point out the position of the tongue in uttering it, the upper and lower strokes delineating the roof and bottom of the mouth, and the oblique stroke, the situation of the tongue; and that this was really intended, appears highly probable from the similar character given to the palatine or lingual

N

the sound of which is produced by a similar application of the tongue to the roof of the mouth, the air in this case being

pounded of *d* and *g* soft. The affinity between *d* and *j* appears from the pronunciation of *j* for *d*, and *d* for *j*, which are not uncommon corruptions in some modern languages; as in *juty* for *duty*, *juce* for *deux*, *duice* for *juice*, and, if Mr. Sharp is not mistaken, *Diudice* for *Giudice*, and *Dulio* for *Giulio*, at Venice. See his Eighth Letter from Italy.

being driven up through the nostrils, instead of passing down through the teeth; and thus the same figure, erected for distinction-sake, was truly characteristic of both letters, according to the old line,

Zeta jacens si surgat, erit nota quæ dicitur N.

Supposing what is here advanced to be true, we may conclude, that if the Ζητα hath been sometimes found engraved, in antient inscriptions, like an ητα πλαγίου of the musicians, it must originally have been owing to mistake, since it can have no natural connection with it *.

Kfi

* The only certain instance of *Dzeta's* being written with the middle stroke perpendicular to the other two, which the editor hath taken notice of, though it may be familiar to those who are better versed in antient inscriptions, is upon a medal struck, as he apprehends, upon the Relief of Cyzicum by Timotheus. The letters are, ΣΩΤΥ ΚΥ ΞΙΚΗΝΝ [Montfaucon's Antiq. vol. I.], in which the mistake of the last letter of each word shews a want of accuracy that favours what is observed above. But as
ignorance

Kfi and *Sigma* are the two next letters to be considered; the former of which succeeded in the place of the Hebrew *Kfemek*, and the latter in the place of *Sin*.

Now the Hebrew form of *Kfemek* * was that of the *serpent* [D], and that of *Sin*

ignorance in the infancy of letters was a source of many graphical mistakes at first; so caprice or carelessness would afterwards have much the same effect, and *Zητα* might abusively acquire the form of *ητα πλαγιον*; by which name notwithstanding, and not by that of *Zητα*, the imperfect character of Ξ is always distinguished as a musical note.

Alypius et Gaudent. in genere diatono.

* It is not easy to reconcile the name of this letter with the form of it. $\gamma\mu\delta$ signifies, *fulcrum continuum*, a prop or support, any thing upon which to rest or lean, and is not used for the serpent in any passage that we know of; but, at the same time, it might not improperly be applied to the *Scytale*, common in Africa and the Levant, so called from *σχυταλη*, *baculus*, its head and tail being nearly of the same bigness; from whence Dr. Shaw supposes that it was, in all probability,

Sin [ψ], a *tooth*. The shape of the one called up the voice of the animal, which, in all probability, most nearly resembled the original manner of pronouncing this letter; and the *name* and *shape* of Sin were equivalent to calling it the *tooth-letter*, which denoted and characterised its power. The Greeks, on the contrary, gave a delineation of the organs to *Kfi*, and the figure of the serpent to *Sigma*. The original form of *Kfi*, which is very little altered, we take to have been this, or something like it :



in which the horizontal lines denote the lips, which are drawn afunder without opening the jaw, and discover the teeth, marked out by the shorter line indented.

The

probability, the *Amphisbœna* of Lucan, l. ix. Martini tells us, that the Athenians sometimes used the Ξ [whose smaller figure is that of a serpent raised upon its tail, ξ] instead of *Sigma*.

Græco-Phoenix ad Literam Σ .

The lesser sigma [σ] very nearly resembles the Hebrew Semech [ס] reversed; and the greater, which was sometimes written in the manner of the Roman C, was the serpent in its folds. It hath been affirmed by Tacitus and Pliny, that the Roman letters were the antient Greek ones. Now there can be little doubt that S* was taken from the figure of the serpent; and if what is said of the connection which the present Greek characters have with the disposition of their respective organs in pronunciation be allowed, it will be found at
least

* Sigma, in the inscriptions given us by Dr. Shuckforth in the place above quoted, hath these three several forms, Σ , Σ , Σ ; the two first in the Sigean, and the last in those of the Thebaic Tripods, and the pillars of the *Attic* Herod, erected by that celebrated scholar to perpetuate what he *supposed* to have been the forms of the antient Ionic characters. A very exact draught of these characters is given us in a collection of letters by a young Painter in Italy, from the fragments of the pillars themselves, which remained in the Farnese Palace at Rome, in the year 1748.

least as striking, with regard to most of the Roman characters, which are said to have been those of the first Greek alphabet* communicated to the Etrurians by the Pelasgi, upon their being driven out of Greece by the Hellens †.

The

* Pliny, l. vii. c. 56 and 58. Tacit. Ann. l. xi.

† The Etruscan alphabet seems to have been rudely copied from the Greek; but in what æra it was carried into Italy, it is presumed, can no way be determined with certainty. There are who suppose it to have been *prior* to the Pelasgic, and that letters were originally communicated from Etruria to the Grecians. Without engaging in a subject which requires the most extensive knowledge of inscriptions and chronology, let it only be observed of the *Æolic Digamma*, which was one of the old *Etruscan* characters, that whether we suppose its power to have been the power of the Roman F (which differed little from our *English* Ve), or the power of the Roman V, it shews the use of a consonant *ꝛ* not to have been unknown to the antient Greeks, as hath been before observed. But its form being that of a double Vau* (or, as the Greeks called it, *βαν*), which it
might

* See Plate I. and Note, p. 5.

The only remaining letter to be taken notice of is *Tbeta*, or the aspirated *Tau*, which was one of the later invention ; and the form of this most evidently shews the situation of the tongue, which is thrust beyond the teeth in its pronunciation, the circle marking the disclosure of the lips.



It is easy to foresee, that these resemblances will not appear through the medium of scholastic prejudice, whilst others may ascribe them to the ingenuity of chance ; and, of course, that what hath been advanced concerning the principle upon which the Grecian letters are supposed

might better have been termed than a Digamma, seems to determine its *power* to have been that of the Roman V, rather than F ; the former of which was certainly pronounced, in general, like our English W, if we may judge by the Grecian manner of transposing it from the Roman characters into their own.

supposed to have been formed, will in either case be looked upon as an imaginary whim. The Editor will not undertake to defend it: as a *whimsical* conjecture, it may still afford some entertainment. *Better* reasons might perhaps be offered in its favour than what appear at present: but those that are acquainted with the conjectures of the learned Baxter * upon this subject, who hath found the figure of a sheep in the Samaritan J , and of Isis and her son Horus in X , with some other resemblances nearly as wild, will not be disposed to think it altogether so extravagant. Be this as it may, extravagance (which is a term applied to any deviation from what is usual) is no criterion of falsehood, nor is that always the right road that is the most beaten. In the Editor's opinion, it was this very change of the characters, in conformity

H

to

* Letter on the Antient Method of Writing in Characters.

to the position of the organs in utterance (so far as it was capable of being pointed out), which enabled the Greeks to propagate the art of literal knowledge, with more facility than other nations, amongst themselves. They who have never attempted to instruct others in this art, who were utterly unacquainted with letters in their younger days, can have no just idea of the difficulties that attend the task : and whoever would succeed in it, must make use of some method to point out the very *first beginnings* of the elemental sounds, and teach his pupils to prepare their organs, and fix them ready for utterance, before the sounds be permitted to burst from their lips. This end was to be attained among the Greeks by the study of the letters themselves, and must of course have very much contributed to promote an accuracy of pronunciation, as well as to facilitate the progress of alphabetic writing.

The

The acuteness of this people in the advancement of the arts in general is universally allowed : but the ardour with which they applied themselves to the study of literal writing, and the improvement of their language, appears from hence, that it seems to have been brought *nearly* to perfection in the age of Homer ; namely, within a space not much exceeding a hundred-and-sixty years from the first introduction of letters into Greece.

That Homer (whose name in Celtic is said to mean the Bard or Man of Song) at least took the *idea* of his works from former traditional poems, is more than problematical* ; and it is thought from some internal proofs, that these were likewise

H 2

Celtic

* Helene, the daughter of Musæus, wrote a Poem of the Trojan War ; and one Syagrus, mentioned by Ælian as the next Poet after Orpheus and Musæus, is said to have exercised his Muse upon the same subject.

Celtic. But in whatever language these memorial poems were composed, which Homer styles the language of the Gods, and which we conceive to have been more suitable to the simplicity of manners in the Iliad and the Odyssey, than the artificial language of the Grecian bard (fettered as it is, moreover, with the chains of a returning measure); it should seem that alphabetic writing was unknown at the time of the Trojan war, forasmuch as no *certain* traces of it are to be met with either in the Iliad or Odyssey*.

Now

* The only passage where alphabetic writing may be thought to have been intended, is in the story of Bellerophon, who is described as carrying a sealed tablet to Jobates containing an order for his own death. But it does not follow from the expression of the Poet used upon this occasion, that letters, properly so called, were written in it; since the term *σηματα* is at least as applicable to some private marks or tokens, or to any kind of symbolic characters, as letters; and Cicero *seems* to have used the synonymous word *σημειον* for what we now call *Cypher*, in the 32d Epistle of the xiiiith Book to Atticus: *Et quod*

ad

Now the conclusion of the expedition against Troy, according to the best conjectures of chronologers (for nothing certain can be had), was about 300 years *before* the age of Homer; but it was not till the sixteenth year of the reign of David, that is, about 135 years *after* the destruction of Troy (according to Le Clerc, who follows Petavius), that Cadmus, at the head of a colony of Phœnicians who fled from the victorious arms

H 3 of

ad te de decem legatis scripsi, parum intellexi, credo, quia διὰ σημείων scripseram. But supposing alphabetic letters to have been intended by the *σήματα λόγια* of Homer, the story might be nothing more than a poetic fable, the incidents of which were taken from the real histories of Joseph and Uriah, the gallantry of David, his marriage with Michal, his banishment, &c. confused accounts of which might have been brought into Greece by the Phœnicians with the Hebrew letters. And what may incline us rather to suspect this fable of Bellerophon was composed from some particulars of Jewish history, is his conquest of the Solymi, a people who never existed but in imagination, unless we suppose them the inhabitants of Jerusalem. See Mr. Pope's Note, *Iliad*, b. vi.

of this monarch, carried alphabetic writing into Greece. Newt. Chron. p. 12, 13, 105.

It must be allowed, that this is taking a disputed point for granted, since it is not certain *who* the Cadmus was that introduced it. Thus much may at least be said, however, for the conjecture; That it is, perhaps, as well founded as many others upon this subject which have met with approbation from the learned *.

But

* Sir Isaac Newton, whose opinion is here followed with respect to the different ages of Cadmus and of Homer, from what are fixt by other chronologers, makes the Trojan war to have commenced *long after* the migration of the Phœnicians under Cadmus, and the introduction of letters into Greece; whereas it seems most probably to have been carried on during the time of the Judges over Israel, whilst the knowledge of an alphabetic character was confined within the precincts of Judæa.

Homer and Hesiod are in general supposed to have been contemporaries; they are even said to have sung together

But whatever progress had been made
by the Greeks in polishing their language

H 4 in

together in Delos; and Herodotus in Euterpe tells us, that they lived only 400 years before his time: now Herodotus flourished about 456 years before the Christian æra, which brings the age of Homer to about 856 years before Christ. But we have a more authentic proof of the age of Hesiod from his Second Book of Works and Days, in which he directs the pruning of their vines in Boeotia to be begun upon the rising of Arcturus at sun-set, sixty days after the winter solstice; and again, all the grapes to be gathered, and their second vintage ended, when the same star rose at day-break: from which account of the heliacal rising of this star it follows, that Homer and Hesiod flourished about 100 years after the death of Solomon, that is, 875 years before the Christian æra; 164 years after the introduction of letters into Greece by *Cadmus*; and about 309 years from the conclusion of the war against Troy, as that event is settled by Petavius, who places it in the time of the government of Jair, the Galeadite, over Israel.

The reason of Sir Isaac Newton's fixing the æra of the destruction of Troy *after* the age of Cadmus, was a full persuasion, that the expedition of the
Argo-

in the days of Homer, the cultivation of the polite arts in after-times, and especially

Argonauts was not undertaken till upwards of 40 years after the death of Solomon; whereas it was certain, that many of the sons of the Argonauts were captains at the siege of Troy.

But the authority upon which Sir Isaac Newton chiefly grounds his opinion of the æra of the Argonautic expedition, hath been shewn by many writers to be unsatisfactory, not only from the uncertainty of the author he hath quoted to establish his *first principle*, but from the well-known ignorance of the Grecian astronomers even in *after-times*, whose skill went little farther than to fix the heliacal rising or setting of a few stars, to serve the purposes of agriculture. Besides this, it is not at all clear from Hesiod's account of the four ages of the world, denominated from the value of different metals, and his concern for being born in that of iron, as he describes them from the 109th line to the 180th of the first book, that this Poet lived only *one* * *age of about 30 or 40 years* after the Trojan war. This interpretation, with all due submission to so great an authority, seems strangely forced, and by no means to be argued from as an indisputable fact.

* Newton's Chron. p. 32.

ALPHABETIC WRITING. 105

ally their strong attachment to the study of Philosophy, which applied the art of writing

The following Table hath the appearance of coming nearer the Chronological Truth, which yet, perhaps, the more judicious reader may discern sufficient reasons to reject.

	<i>Bef. Chr.</i>	
Argonautic Expedition,	1214	<i>Petav.</i>
Conclusion of the Trojan war,	1184	<i>Petav.</i>
David succeeds Saul, —	1055	<i>Petav.</i>
Phœnicians carry letters into } Greece under Cadmus, }	1039	{ <i>Newton's Chron.</i> p. 106.
Solomon ascends the throne,	1015	<i>Petav.</i>
Solomon dies, —	975	<i>Petav.</i>
Homer and Hesiod flourish,	875	<i>Newt. Chr. p. 95.</i>

We may observe from Hesiod's account of finishing the vintage when Arcturus rose at day-break, which shews the grapes in Greece to have been ripe while the sun was passing through the constellation called Erigone, that this imaginary daughter of *Icarus* was nothing more than a Hebrew term for the business of the season, from *חרג*, to cut off, and *ענב*, the grapes; *i. e.* Erigoneb, only leaving out the letter *b*, to give the name a Grecian termination. The mystery of Bacchus under the canister of grapes needs no clearer explanation, and was undoubtedly a fable of the later Greeks, whether the more Eastern people gave this name to the constellation *Virgo* or not.

writing more particularly to the improvement of the understanding, still enriched it more, and opened all the treasures of the Sciences. The victories they obtained over the rest of mankind in this respect kept pace with all their other conquests, and prepared the way for true Religion by holding up the light of Reason, and darting through that cloud of Ignorance which long had overspread the Eastern regions. The Grecian language gained the universal admiration of the learned; it subdued their haughty conquerors at last,——

——& artes

Intulit agreſti Latio.——

From hence, as from another center, the rays of Science shot into the Western world; and the barbarous nations who penetrated into Italy towards the close of the Roman empire, carried arts and learning back into the North*.

Thus

* The Runic Alphabet is thought by some to have been original, from the order and paucity of its letters;

Thus the virtues and the vices of men, their prosperity and adversity, alike contributed to bring about the purposes of God ; and he seems in a peculiar manner to

letters ; but the forms of the following characters : *P*, *Ḍ*, *R*, *I*, *Ḥ*, *T*, *Ḗ*, *Ḳ*, that is *Fei*, *Oys*, *Ridhur*, *Ḥis*, *Sol*, *Tyr*, *Biarkan*, and *Lagur*, seem to evince this to be a mistake. The first of these is a rude imitation of the Roman *F*, with the same vocal power ; the second is an inverted Digamma, (as it was proposed by the emperor Claudius) with the power of the Roman *V*, that is, of *ou* or *W* ; the third is evidently the Roman *R*, with the same vocal power ; as *Ḥis* precisely is the Roman *I* ; *Sol* is a resemblance of the Sigeian Sigma, with the same power ; *Tyr* is certainly an imitation of the Grecian *tau*, or Roman *T*, which was borrowed from the Samaritan form of this letter. *Biarkan* is evidently *beta*, or the Roman *B* ; and *Lagur* appears to have been taken from the Grecian *lamda*, as we sometimes see it, which was borrowed likewise from the Samaritan *◀*. If these letters were not introduced into the North by some of those who invaded the Roman Empire ; however uncertain we are with respect to the time of their introduction there ; we may reasonably conclude, that they were carried by that savage people from the borders of Asia, in an earlier age ; but these resemblances sufficiently evidence that they were copies.

to have raised up this extraordinary people, to have inspired them with a love of Freedom, and maintained their independence for a time, in order to form a language fit for the conveyance of Divine Truths *, which continues by its sweetness to allure men to the study of it, and, as it is no longer in danger of being *corrupted*

* The Grecian common-wealths, saith the learned author of Hermes, whilst they maintained their liberty, were the most heroic confederacy that ever existed; they were the politest, the bravest, and the wisest of men. In the short space of *little more than a century* they became such statesmen, warriors, orators, historians, poets, critics, painters, sculptors, architects, and, last of all, philosophers, that one can hardly help considering that golden period as a providential event, in honour of human nature, to shew to what perfection the species might ascend. Now the language of the Greeks was truly like themselves; it was conformable to their transcendent genius: where matter so abounded, words followed of course, and those exquisite in every kind as the ideas for which they stood: and hence it follows, there was not a subject to be found, which could not with propriety be expressed in Greek.—Hermes, p. 416.

rupted in itself †, will preserve *them* likewise *uncorrupted* to the consummation of all things.

In this view we may consider the discovery of alphabetic writing, not only as intended to sweeten life by an enlargement of its social pleasures; to soften the rigours of absence, and connect the inhabitants of distant countries; or, what is still a nobler idea, to defeat the malice of Time by uniting the wisdom and discoveries of

† The wisdom of Divine Providence is not less conspicuous in that wretched state of subjection to which the Greeks are now reduced, than in their former exaltation; since by this event the language of their ancestors, after continuing a living language, with little variation, near two thousand years (a circumstance not far short of miraculous), is now so absolutely dead, that the vulgar dialect of modern Greece is said to be as distant from it as the Russian. It was thus the Hebrew ceased to be a living language about four hundred years before our Saviour, when God thought proper to close the sacred canon of the Old Testament, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy with the preaching of Malachi.

distant ages, and giving us a familiar converse with the dead ; but principally to carry on the grand scheme of Providence in conducting the whole race of sinful man from the darkness of Error into the light of Truth, and to bring him into a union with God.



Order and Powers of the Persian Letters compared with those of the Hebrew.					Order and Powers of the Arabic Letters compared with those of the Hebrew.					Coptic or Egyptian Letters.		
N ^o of the Persian Letters	Names of the Persian Letters	Corresponding Hebrew Letters	Vocal Powers of the Persian Letters	Numeral Powers of the Persian and Hebrew Letters	N ^o of the Arabic Letters	Names of the Arabic Letters	Corresponding Hebrew Letters	Vocal Powers of the Arabic Letters	Numeral Powers of the Arabic and Hebrew Letters	Names and Order of the Coptic Letters	Forms of the Coptic Letters	Vocal Powers of the Coptic Letters
1	Elif	א	1	1	1	Elif	א	A	1	Alpha	Α	A
2	Be	ב	B	2	2	Be	ב	B	2	Veta	Β	Γ
3	Pe	פ	P	400	3	Te	ט	T	400	Gammal	Γ	Γ
4	Ta	ט	T	400	1	Thac	ת	Tha		Dadla	Δ	Δ
5	Ye	י	Y	300	5	Gym	י	G soft	3	Ei	Ε	Ε
6	Gym	י	G soft	3	6	Hha	ח	Hh	8	So	Σ	Σ
7	Cha	כ	Ch soft		7	Cha	כ	Ch		Zida	Ζ	Ζ
8	Hha	ח	Hh	8	8	Dad	ד	D	4	Hada	Η	Η
9	Cha	כ	Ch		9	Dahaf	ד	D		Thida	Θ	Θ
10	Dal	ד	D	4	10	Re	ר	R	200	Junda	Ι	Ι
11	Zal	ז	Z		11	Ze	ז	Z	7	Kappha	Κ	Κ
12	Re	ר	R	200	12	Sim	ש	S	300	Lauda	Λ	Λ
13	Ze	ז	Z da	7	13	Schim	ש	Sch	60	Me	Μ	Μ
14	Zhe	ז	Zh		14	Taad	ט	T	90	Ni	Ν	Ν
15	Sim	ש	S		15	Dad	ד	D		Xi	Ξ	Ξ
16	Schim	ש	Sch	60	16	Tha	ת	Th	9	O	Ο	Ο
17	Taad	ט	T	90	17	Da	ד	D		Bi	Π	Π
18	Zad	ז	Z		18	Oim	ז	O	70	Ro	Ρ	Ρ
19	Ta	ט	Th	9	19	Gauu	ג	G hard		Sima	Σ	Σ
20	Za	ז	Z ka		20	Phac	פ	Ph	80	Dau	Τ	Τ
21	Oim	ז	O	70	21	Kaf	כ	K Q	100	Ew	Υ	Υ
22	Gauu	ג	G hard		22	Kef	כ	Ch hard	20	Phi	Φ	Φ
23	Phac	פ	Ph	80	23	Lam	ל	L	30	Chi	Χ	Χ
24	Kaf	כ	K Q	100	24	Meim	מ	M	40	Ou	Ω	Ω
25	Kef	כ	Ch hard	20	25	Nun	נ	N	50	Skai	Υ	Σ
26	Ghaf	ג	Gh		26	Wau	ו	W V	6	Fai	ϣ	ϣ
27	Lam	ל	L	30	27	He	ה	E	5	Chai	ח	ח
28	Meim	מ	M	40	28	Je	י	J i y	10	Hori	Ξ	Ξ
29	Nun	נ	N	50						Giangid	Ϟ	Γ
30	Vau	ו	V U	6						Sima	Ϡ	Γ
31	He	ה	E	5						Dei	τ	Δ
32	Ye	י	J i y	10						Bot	ϣ	Ρ

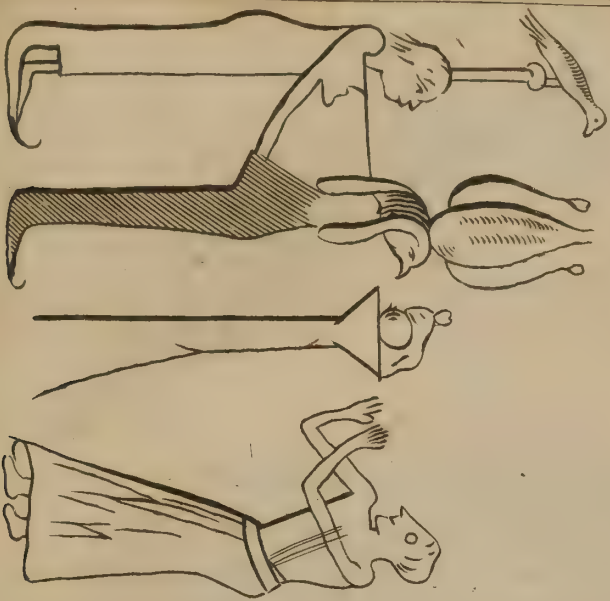
Original order of the Hebrew Letters

NB. It may be presumed that the numeral powers of the Coptic Letters answered to those of the Greek Alphabet so far as they correspond in their vocal powers, but for this the writer hath no authority.



Plate III.

34 0j. H J II 11 63 F
-J. h 0j 34 j 14 50 1 d
1 E 0j. 7 11 : f 3 1 . 4
≡ ≡ ≡ 11 . # . 3 9 . 4 0 1 1 1

[illegible]

1871-1872

卷之四

[illegible]

IF we may be allowed to *guess* at the subject of the Inscription in this Third Plate from the figures thus rudely sketched upon the same Table, without the imputation of giving an unwarrantable indulgence to Imagination, there is reason to suppose it one of the sacred Hymns of Isis, who was worshipped as the plastic mother of the universe. To her bounty in the direction of the seasons the Ægyptians thought the earth indebted for its fertility, and Man, with all the animals upon its surface, and the fowls of heaven, to be nourished and supported. Thus much might be pointed out *by the three symbolic figures*; that equality which is observed in the length of the apparent *literal* lines here divided into columns (which would have been unnecessary in prose), seems to imply some kind of a poetic measure; and we know that the Ægyptian Priests pretended to have preserved many compositions of this sort, which the Goddess had delivered for the ritual of her own worship. These were called, *The Songs or Poems of Isis*; and this may probably be the only one of them remaining: but we almost despair of seeing this specimen of the poetic genius of Ægypt (if it be such) ever explained, since it is most likely written with a mixture of the hierogrammatic characters; which being
invented

invented to *conceal*, were farther removed from common apprehension, than their ordinary metaphorical hieroglyphics, and, perhaps, are only arbitrary marks to denote the *symbols* even of *symbols*. The Figures were a lesson to the vulgar; *they* could in some degree read and understand; whilst the other part of the inscription was intelligible to the Priests alone; a memorial of some particular service in the worship of their imaginary Deity. Other ideas of the religious Faith of the Ægyptians, than those abovementioned, were probably intended by the common hieroglyphic figures, with the season when these rites were to be celebrated; and it may be supposed that an enlargement upon such ideas thus hinted in general, had no inconsiderable share in the solemnities of the benevolent Goddesses.



P O S T S C R I P T.

IT hath been objected to the Divine Inspiration of Alphabetic Writing at the delivery of the Law, that Moses himself appeals to an antient book of the Wars of the Lord *. What this book was, hath been matter of debate amongst the commentators ; but since we know no wars to which this title could so justly be attributed, as those in which the Israelites were engaged to expel the usurpers of the rights of others, and extirpate the enemies of his religion ;

* Numb. xxi. 14.

gion *; and have, moreover, the authority of Sacred Scripture, that the war with the Amalekites in particular, was expressly called the war of *God against Amalek*; we might justly doubt of its priority to the age of Moses, were there no stronger reasons to be brought against it. But the following circumstances seem to evince it to have been no other than a general account of the Israelitish expeditions against the inhabitants of Canaan, which was begun by Moses, and completed afterwards by Joshua, in the book that bears his name at present.

First, because the book of the Wars of the Lord is not mentioned by Moses as
then

* The greatest part of the inhabitants of Palestine, at the time of the Israelite invasion, were not descended from its first possessors, but a savage race of Tyrants, who had driven out or extirpated the original owners, in opposition to an appointment of God; and having thus far acted as the ministers of his vengeance, and filled up the measure of their own iniquities, were justly doomed to suffer what they had inflicted upon others.

then actually written, but as one designed to be compiled *hereafter*; forasmuch as the word יאמר*, which we translate in the *past* time, “*it is said* in the book of “ the Wars of the Lord,” &c. ought to have been rendered in the *future* time, “*it shall be said.*”

And Secondly, because the actions to be recorded in this book were, the miraculous passage through the Red Sea (in which Jehovah was particularly styled the Champion of the Israelites), and the passage of Arnon; but the record of these actions could not have preceded the actions themselves.

A similar objection is taken from the thirteenth verse of the tenth chapter of the book of Joshua, in which there is an appeal to the Book of Jasher. And here, to pass by what is evident, that the action likewise said to be recorded in this book, was the relief of the Gibeonites some

I 2

time

* Numb. xxi. 15.

time *after* the death of Moses ; it is submitted to the learned in the Hebrew language, whether ספר הישר may not signify any true, authentic memorial whatever, and may therefore very reasonably be understood of the *original copy* of the book of Joshua, or of the Sacred Scriptures in general. This opinion is supported by the Septuagint Translation, in the eighteenth verse of the first chapter of the second book of Samuel, where הישר is rendered by the adjective ευθους, ἐπὶ τῷ βιβλίῳ τῷ ευθοῦς, in the *uncorrupted Record* ; and the Chaldee * Paraphrast expressly calls the book of Jasher, *The book of the Law*.

It may yet perhaps be urged, that the conclusion of the thirteenth verse of the
tenth

* Joshua, x. 13.

N. B. The book of Jasher is not mentioned in the Septuagint translation of the tenth chapter of the book of Joshua, though the passage occurs in all the other versions of it.

gular fucceffion, to the death of Joshua; and moft probably to that of David; and that this line of a memorial ode upon their victory over the Amorites at Gibeon, was *added* by the tranfcriber of the facred writings, with his remark from whence it was taken.

Josephus, in his account of this victory †, when he mentions the fun's ftanding ftill, appeals for the truth of his relation to certain records that were preferved in the Temple :

δηλοῦται δια τῶν ἀνακειμένων ἐν τῷ Ιερῷ γραμμάτων.

But if by the writings faid to have been thus preferved in the Temple, he did not mean the facred books themselves (and his veracity could be depended on), it is not improbable, that he refers to a collection of fuch hiftorical fongs, as we prefume the book of Jafher to have confifted of. The ode

of

† Antiq. lib. v. c. 2,

of lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, which was called *The Bow*, is said to have been written in the book of Jasher, and appointed for the use of the children of Judah ‡; and there is some reason to believe, that part of our collection of the Psalms might be copied from this very book.

The Reader will determine for himself; but upon any of the suppositions above given, the mention of *The book of the wars of the Lord*, and *The book of Jasher*, is no sufficient objection to the conjecture, that Alphabetic Writing was unknown in the world, till it pleased God to inspire the idea, at the coming-out of Ægypt, to put a stop to the increase of that species of idolatry, which arose from an abuse of their symbolic characters.

I 4

One

‡ 11 Sam. chap. i. verse 18.

One observation more may be added, which should have been inserted in another place, had it occurred sooner. It hath been assumed *, upon the authority of Dionysius the Grammarian, that the just number of elemental sounds was not to be ascertained, even so long after the invention of Letters as the Augustan age; from whence the almost absolute impossibility of the discovery of Alphabetic Writing, by the unassisted powers of human wit, is argued *a priori*: but it ought to have been mentioned, that since we know the Hebrew language was compleat before the time of *Moses*, (in so far as *accidental* variations or inflections were concerned;) so, many of the elemental sounds might often have occurred to the observation of a genius so transcendent as his. Those elements I mean, are what we call the servile letters, as opposed to radical; all

* Page 12.

all which are to be met with, *singly*-added to original terms. Thus to ד (he delivered), the elemental sound of א was prefixed, to denote the first person future in its passive signification, *I shall be delivered*; ב prefixed to an original word, was the preposition *in, with, by, &c.* and in like manner he might separate the powers of ה, ו, י, כ, ל, מ, נ, ש, and ת, from the radical words, to which they are occasionally joined, in the construction of this language; and if Alphabetic Writing was the effort of the Prophet's own mind, his observation of the separate powers of these additional sounds, was, in all likelihood, the first step upon which he raised himself to discover the other elemental powers for the framing of an Alphabet.

A critical acquaintance with the oriental languages in general, is requisite to determine whether these distinctions of the servile letters, are *peculiarly* observable

fervable in the Hebrew language above others ; and how far the simplicity of such distinctions tend to show the probability of its being the Primæval Language of mankind, is a subject not unworthy an enquiry.

The Editor suspects that this remark may afterwards be brought to favour the opinion of an *earlier* Origin of Letters than hath been supposed. Nothing is affirmed with certainty. It would be a pleasure to him to receive any new lights upon the subject, which those of better Learning may think proper to afford ; and to acknowledge his mistakes, should this little Essay merit their attention.

T H E E N D.

The Conversation between Queen Elizabeth and Dr. Symson, Dean of her Majesty's Chapel, on the Subject of Pictures of the Supreme Being, Saints, Angels, &c. being allowed in Churches or Chapels. — Referred to in Page 52 of this Work.

THE Dean, having gotten from a foreigner several fine Cuts and Pictures, representing the stories and passions of the Saints and Martyrs, had placed them against the epistles and gospels of their festivals in a Common-Prayer Book. And this book he had caused to be richly bound, and laid on the cushion for the Queen's use, in the place where she commonly sat; intending it for a new-year's gift to her Majesty, and thinking to have pleased her fancy therewith. But it had not that effect, but the contrary. For she considered how this varied from her late open injunctions and proclamations against the superstitious use of Images in Churches, and for the taking away

away all such Reliques of Popery. When she came to her place she opened the book, and perused it, and saw the Pictures; but frowned and blushed: and then shut it, (of which several took notice) and calling the verger, bad him bring her the old book, wherein she was formerly wont to read. After sermon, whereas she was wont to get immediately on horseback, or into her chariot, she went strait to the vestry, and applying herself to the Dean, thus she spoke to him:

Q. Mr. Dean, How came it to pass that a new Service-Book was placed on my cushion?

To which the Dean answered.

D. May it please your Majesty, I caused it to be placed there.

Then said the Queen.

Q. Wherefore did you so?

D. To present your Majesty with a new-year's gift.

Q. You could never present me with a worse.

D. Why so, madam?

Q. You know I have an aversion to Idolatry; to Images and Pictures of this kind.

D. Wherein is the idolatry, may it please your Majesty?

Q. In

Q. In the Cuts resembling Angels and Saints; nay grosser absurdities, Pictures resembling the Blessed Trinity.

D. I meant no harm: nor did I think it would offend your Majesty, when I intended it for a new-year's gift.

Q. You must needs be ignorant then. Have you forgot our proclamation against Images, Pictures and Romish Reliques in the churches? Was it not read in your deanry?

D. It was read. But be your Majesty assured, I meant no harm, when I caused the cuts to be bound with the Service-book.

Q. You must needs be very ignorant to do this after our prohibition of them.

D. It being my ignorance, your Majesty may the better pardon me.

Q. I am sorry for it; yet glad to hear it was your ignorance, rather than your opinion.

D. Be your Majesty assured, it was my ignorance.

Q. If so, Mr. Dean, God grant you his spirit, and more wisdom for the future.

D. Amen, I pray God.

Q. I pray, Mr. Dean, how came you by these Pictures? Who engraved them?

D. I

D. I know not who engraved them. I bought them:

Q. From whom bought you them?

D. From a German.

Q. It is well it was from a stranger. Had it been any of our subjects, we should have questioned the matter. Pray let no more of these mistakes, or of this kind, be committed within the churches of our realm for the future.

D. There shall not.

This matter occasioned all the clergy in and about London, and the church-wardens of each parish, to search their churches and chapels; and caused them to wash out of the walls all paintings that seemed to be Romish and idolatrous; and in lieu thereof suitable texts taken out of the Holy Scriptures to be written.

H Y M N T O I S I S.

*L*ET our song be of the benevolent Isis,
Who giveth fodder to the cattle,
And nourisheth the fowls of heaven:
By her command the North-wind bloweth,
The clouds pour down rain
Upon the mountains of Æthiopia,
They scatter plenty thro' the land of Ægypt.

What time the hawk flieth toward the South,
Her vessel shall be filled, it shall overflow,
The Banana and the Lotus shall blossom.

Let our song be of the benevolent Isis!
The earth is full of her goodness,
And all the elements rejoice.
She condescended to abide with men ;
She filleth our souls with wisdom ;
Though connected with a mortal body,
They shall be exalted in her presence,
If their contemplations rise above the World.

Let our song be of the benevolent Isis !
Her bounty covers the earth,
Her goodness is in the clouds.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN RICHARDSON

OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE

ESQ.

LONDON

Printed by

JOHN STURGEON

AT THE SIGN OF THE

SHIELD

IN ST. MARTIN'S LANE

1675

Printed by

JOHN STURGEON

AT THE SIGN OF THE

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